

mistaken; but if he flatters himself that he deceived me he is at least as much mistaken as I am. I cannot, of course, defend my dealings with this official upon any high moral ground; but I was playing a hazardous game, with everything at stake and no means of self-protection except diplomacy. In my baggage, or on my person, I had revolutionary documents, plans of prisons, papers from Government archives, letters to and from political convicts, and ten or fifteen note-books that would have incriminated not only scores of exiles in all parts of Siberia but many fearless and honest officials who had trusted me and given me information. If suspicion should be aroused and I should be searched, it would not only bring disaster upon all of these people, as well as upon me, but would probably result in the loss of all my material and in the punishment of everybody who had had anything to do with furnishing it. In view of the critical nature of my situation, and the number of lives and fortunes that might depend upon my safety, I sincerely trust that the recording angel dropped a tear or two upon some of my statements to Captain Nikólin and blotted them out forever.

Late in the afternoon the commandant and I parted, with mutual assurances of distinguished consideration, and I directed my steps towards the little cabin of Miss Nathalie Armfeldt, which was situated about midway between the political prison and the house of Major Pótulof on the outskirts of the Lower Diggings. My nerves were strung up to a high state of tension by my interview with Captain Nikólin; I was flushed with a consciousness of success, and I felt equal to anything.

Miss Armfeldt, whose history I already knew, was the daughter of a prominent Russian general now dead, and was the sister of Madam Fedchénko, wife of a well-known Russian scientist and explorer. The family was a wealthy and aristocratic one, and both Miss Armfeldt and her mother were friends, or at least acquaintances, of the emi-

nent Russian novelist Count Tolstói. Miss Armfeldt herself spoke French, German, and English, drew, painted, and was an educated and accomplished woman.<sup>1</sup> She was arrested in Kiev on the 11th of February, 1879, while attending one of the meetings of a secret revolutionary society. They were surprised by the police late in the evening, and the men of the party resisted arrest, drawing revolvers and firing at the police and the gendarmes. A sharp skirmish followed, in the course of which one gendarme and two of the revolutionists were shot dead and several on each side wounded. The whole party was finally captured and thrown into prison. For being present at the time of this armed resistance to the police, although she had not participated in it, and for belonging to the revolutionary party, Miss Armfeldt was sentenced to fourteen years and ten months of penal servitude, with deprivation of all civil rights and exile to Siberia for life.<sup>2</sup> At the time of our visit to Kará she had finished her term of probation in prison, and was living outside in the free command with her

<sup>1</sup> I regret that I am unable to give more details of Miss Armfeldt's life. A Russian revolutionist to whom I applied for information wrote me as follows:

"I knew Miss Armfeldt personally and have some idea of her as an individual; but as to biographical details—such matters interest us so little when we are 'in action' that we hardly ever ask one another about them. I only know that her father was a general, and that her sister, who was a tolerably well-known writer on scientific subjects, was married to the Russian explorer Fedchenko, who perished recently on a mountain in Switzerland. Personally, Nathalie Armfeldt was not one of the striking personalities, such as Perófskaya, Bárdina, and others. She belonged to that modest set of workers in whom the beautiful moral qualities of the Russian revolutionist are shown at their best—absolute de-

votion and absolute unselfishness. These simple virtues become great, both as qualities and as moving powers, when they are so elevated as to be almost perfectly pure. You have probably seen many of these types among the Siberian exiles. The touching sympathy that permeates what you write about them is a proof of this."

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Debagóri-Mokriévich, who was arrested at this time and sent to Siberia, but who succeeded in making his escape, has published an interesting account of the capture, trial, and condemnation of this party. It consisted of fourteen persons, of whom two were found to be not guilty, two were hanged, and all the rest sent to Siberia for life with fourteen years and ten months of penal servitude. See "Two Years of Life," by Debagóri-Mokriévich. [*Messenger of the Will of the People*, No. 1, p. 21, Geneva, 1883.]

mother, a lady sixty or sixty-five years of age, who had voluntarily come to Siberia to share her daughter's fate.

The sun had set and it was fast growing dark when I reached the little whitewashed cabin which, from the de-



THE CABIN OF THE ARMFELDTS.

scriptions I had had of it, I thought must be the Armfeldts'. I knocked at the heavy wooden door, and in a moment it was unbarred and opened by a young woman.

"Does Miss Armfeldt live here?" I inquired.

"I am Miss Armfeldt," she replied.

"My name is George Kennan," I said; "I am an American traveler, and I have come to Siberia to investigate the exile system. I have met many of your friends, and I bring a letter of introduction to you from Madam N——."

She looked at me for almost a minute in silent and half-incredulous amazement. Finally she seemed to recover herself and said, "Pray come in." I followed her through a small, dark entry into a wretched little room about ten feet long by eight feet wide, with bare floor and ceiling of rough-hewn planks, rough walls of squared logs covered with dingy whitewash, and two small, nearly square windows. The furniture of the room, which was all rude and home-made, consisted of a square pine table without a cloth, three unpainted pine chairs, and a narrow single bedstead covered with a coarse gray blanket. On each side of the door were shelves, upon which were a few domestic vessels and utensils, such as plates, cups and saucers, knives and forks, and a tea-pot. The room contained absolutely nothing else except a basket and a cheap Russian trunk under the bed. Everything was scrupulously neat and clean, but in other respects the house looked like the home of some wretchedly poor Irish laborer. I removed my heavy overcoat, and was about to hand Miss Armfeldt the letter that I had for her, when she caught me suddenly by the arm and said, "Stop! Don't do that! Wait until I put up the window-shutters and bar the door." She lighted a candle with trembling hands, and then ran out and closed the windows with tight board shutters, barred the door, and returning said, "You are not accustomed to the atmosphere of alarm and apprehension in which we live. You might have been seen through the window giving me a letter." She then took the letter; but without opening it fixed her eyes upon me with the expression of bewildered, half-incredulous amazement that had not left her face since I introduced myself at the door. Finally she said, "How did you ever get here?"



I replied that I had come on horseback over the mountains from Strétinsk.

"But how were you ever *allowed* to come here?"

"I was not allowed," I replied. "I came here without anybody's knowledge. I have been in Kará almost a week, and this is the first opportunity I have had to get out-of-doors unwatched."

I then told her that I had come to Siberia to investigate the life of the political convicts, and gave her a brief account of my previous Siberian experience. She looked at me like one half dazed by the shock of some great and sudden surprise. Finally she said, speaking for the first time in English: "Excuse me for staring at you so, and pardon me if I have not seemed to welcome you cordially; but I can hardly believe that I am awake. I am so excited and astonished that I don't know what I am doing or saying. You are the first foreigner that I have seen since my exile, and your sudden appearance here, and in my house, is such an extraordinary event in my life that it has completely overwhelmed me. I feel as Livingstone must have felt when Stanley found him in Central Africa. How did the remarkable idea of coming to Siberia and investigating the life of the political convicts ever enter your head?"

I was answering her question in English, when I heard a feeble and broken voice, which seemed to come from behind the oven, inquiring, in Russian, "Who is there, Nathalie? With whom are you talking?"

"It is an American traveler, mother, who has found us even here at the mines."

The feeble voice was that of Miss Armfeldt's mother, who had been asleep on a cot bed behind a low partition that partly screened the oven, and who had been awakened by our conversation. In a moment she came out to greet me — a worn, broken woman, sixty or sixty-five years of age, with soft gray hair, and a face refined, gentle, intelligent, but deeply lined by care and grief. Her eyes were swollen,

with heavy, dark semicircles under them, as if she had spent many long, weary nights in weeping. It filled my heart with sympathy and pity merely to look at her. I had never seen so sad, hopeless, grief-stricken a face.

I spent half an hour with the Armfeldts and then left them, promising to return at a later hour in the evening, when Miss Armfeldt said she would have the other members of the free command there to meet me. Flushed with nervous excitement, I hurried back to Major Pótulof's house, where I found dinner waiting for me. Every now and then in the course of the meal Mrs. Pótulof would look at me with a curious expression in her face, as if she wondered what I had been doing all the afternoon; but apparently she could not summon up resolution enough to ask me, and it did not become necessary, therefore, for the recording angel to drop any more tears upon my already blotted record.

At seven o'clock I went back to the Armfeldts', where I found a political convict named Kurteief, and a pale delicate young woman who was introduced to me as Madam Kolénkina. I recognized the latter by name as one of the revolutionists sent to the mines for alleged complicity in the plot to assassinate General Mézentsef, the St. Petersburg chief of police, but I was surprised to find her so young, delicate, and harmless-looking a woman. I had been surprised, however, in the same way many times before. The women who have taken an active part in some of the most terrible tragedies of the past fifteen years in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Odéssa, who have shown a power of endurance and a stern inflexibility of character rarely found in men, are delicate girls from eighteen to twenty-five years of age, whom I should have taken for teachers in a Sunday-school or rather timid pupils in a female seminary.

One by one the political convicts of the free command began to assemble at Miss Armfeldt's house. Every few minutes a low signal-knock would be heard at one of the

window-shutters, and Miss Armfeldt would go cautiously to the door, inquire who was there, and when satisfied that it was one of her companions would take down the bar and give him admission. The small, dimly lighted cabin, the strained hush of anxiety and apprehension, the soft, mysterious knocking at the window-shutters, the low but eager conversation, and the group of pale-faced men and women who crowded about me with intense, wondering interest, as if I were a man that had just risen from the dead, made me feel like one talking and acting in a strange, vivid dream. There was not, in the whole environment, a single suggestion of the real, commonplace, outside world; and when the convicts, with hushed voices, began to tell me ghastly stories of cruelty, suffering, insanity, and suicide at the mines, I felt almost as if I had entered the gloomy gate over which Dante saw inscribed the dread warning, "Leave hope behind."

About nine o'clock, just as I had taken out my note-book and begun to write, a loud, imperative knock was heard at the side window-shutter. Madam Kolénkina exclaimed in a low, hoarse whisper, "It's the gendarmes! Don't let them come in. Tell them who of us are here, and perhaps they'll be satisfied." Everybody was silent, and it seemed to me that I could hear my heart beat while Miss Armfeldt went to the door and with cool self-possession said to the gendarmes, "We are all here: my mother, I, Kurteief, Madam Kolénkina, and"—the other names I could not catch. After a moment's parley the gendarmes seemed to go away, Miss Armfeldt shut and re-barred the door, and coming back into the room said with a smile, "They were satisfied; they did n't insist on coming in." Then, turning to me, she added in English: "The gendarmes visit us three times a day to see what we are doing, and to make sure that we have not escaped. Their visits, however, have grown to be formal, and they do not always come in."

Conversation was then resumed, and for two hours or more I listened to stories of convict life in prison, on the road, or at the mines, and answered, as well as I could, the

eager questions of the convicts with regard to the progress of the Russian revolutionary movement. In the course of the talk my attention was accidentally attracted to a person whom I had not particularly noticed before and to whom I had not been introduced. It was a man thirty or thirty-five years of age, with a colorless, strangely vacant face and large, protruding blue eyes. He had seated himself on a low wooden stool directly in front of me, had rested his elbows on his knees with his chin in his open hands, and was staring up at me with a steady and at the same time expressionless gaze in which there seemed to be something unnatural and uncanny. At the first pause in the conversation he said to me abruptly, but in a strange, drawling, monotonous tone, "We — have — a — graveyard — of — our — own — here. — Would — you — like — to — see — it?"

I was so surprised and startled by his manner and by the nature of his question that I did not for a moment reply; but the conviction suddenly flashed upon me that it was a political convict who had lost his reason. As the knocking at the gate after the murder in Macbeth seemed to De Quincey to deepen the emotions excited by the tragedy and to reflect back a sort of added horror upon all that had preceded it, so this strange, unprompted question, with its suggestions of insanity and death, seemed to render more vivid and terrible the stories of human suffering that I had just heard, and to intensify all the emotions roused in my mind by the great tragedy of penal servitude.

I remained with the political convicts that night until after midnight, and then walked home with my blood in a fever that even the frosty atmosphere of a semi-arctic night could not cool. Everybody had gone to bed except Mr. Frost, who was watching anxiously for my return. I threw myself on the divan in my room and tried to get to sleep; but all that I had just seen and heard kept surging through my mind, and it was morning before I finally lost consciousness.



## CHAPTER VII

### STATE CRIMINALS AT KARÁ

ON the morning after my first visit to the political convicts of the free command I called again at the little cabin of the Armfeldts, taking Mr. Frost with me. Major Pótulof was expected back from Ust Kará that night, and I knew his return would put a stop to my operations. It was important, therefore, that I should make the best possible use of the twelve or fourteen hours of freedom that still remained to me. I did not expect to be able, for any great length of time, to conceal from the authorities my intercourse with the political convicts. I was well aware that it must, sooner or later, be discovered, and all that I hoped to do was to get as much information as possible before the inevitable interference should come. There was some risk, of course, in visiting the houses of the free command openly by daylight; but we could not afford to waste any time in inaction, and I had promised Miss Armfeldt that I would return early that forenoon if not prevented by some unforeseen complication or embarrassment.

A brisk walk of fifteen or twenty minutes brought us to our destination, and we were admitted to the house by Miss Armfeldt herself. In the searching light of a clear, cold, winter morning, the little cabin, with its whitewashed log walls, plank floor, and curtainless windows, looked even more bare and cheerless than it had seemed to me when I first saw it. Its poverty-stricken appearance, moreover, was emphasized, rather than relieved, by the

presence, in the middle of the room, of a large, rudely fashioned easel, upon which stood an unframed oil painting. There seemed to me something strangely incongruous in this association of art with penal servitude, this blending of luxury with extreme destitution, and as I returned Miss Armfeldt's greeting I could not help looking inquiringly at the picture and then at her, as if to ask, "How did you ever happen to bring an oil-painting to the mines of Kará?" She understood my unspoken query, and, turning the easel half around so that I could see the picture, said: "I have been trying to make a portrait of my mother. She thinks that she must go back to Russia this year on account of her other children. Of course I shall never see her again,—she is too old and feeble to make another journey to Eastern Siberia,—and I want something to recall her face to me when she has gone out of my life. I know that it is a bad portrait, and I am almost ashamed to show it to you; but I wish to ask your help. I have only a few colors, I cannot get any more, and perhaps Mr. Frost may be able to suggest some way of using my scanty materials to better advantage."

I looked at the wretched, almost ghastly, portrait in silence, but with a heart full of the deepest sympathy and pity. It bore a recognizable resemblance to the original, and showed some signs of artistic talent and training; but the canvas was of the coarsest and most unsuitable quality; the colors were raw and crude; and it was apparent, at a glance, that the artist had vainly struggled with insuperable difficulties growing out of a scanty and defective equipment. With the few tubes of raw color at her command she had found it impossible to imitate the delicate tints of living flesh, and the result of her loving labor was a portrait that Mr. Frost evidently regarded with despair, and that seemed to me to be little more than a ghastly caricature. It was pitiful to see how hard the daughter had tried, with wholly inadequate means of execution, to make for herself a likeness of the mother whom she was so

soon to lose, and it was even more pitiful to think that before the close of another year the daughter would be left alone at the mines with this coarse, staring, deathlike portrait as her only consolation. I looked at the picture for a moment in silence, unable to think of any comment that would not seem cold or unsympathetic. Its defects were glaring, but I could not bring myself to criticise a work of love executed under such circumstances and in the face of such disheartening difficulties. Leaving Mr. Frost to examine Miss Armfeldt's scanty stock of brushes and colors, I turned to Mrs. Armfeldt and asked her how she had summoned up resolution enough, at her age, to undertake such a tremendous journey as that from St. Petersburg to the mines of Kará.

"I could not help coming," she said simply. "God knows what they were doing to people here. Nathalie was beaten by soldiers with the butt-ends of guns. Others were starving themselves to death. I could get only vague and alarming reports in St. Petersburg, and so I came here to see for myself. I could not bear to think of Nathalie living alone in the midst of such horrors."

"When did these things happen?" I inquired.

"In 1882 and 1883," she replied. "In May, 1882, eight prisoners made their escape, and after that the life of all the political convicts was made so hard that they finally declared a hunger-strike and starved themselves thirteen days."

While Mrs. Armfeldt and I were talking, Victor Castiúrín, Madam Kolénkina, and two or three other political convicts entered the room, Miss Armfeldt brought out the *samovár* and gave us all tea, and the conversation became general. I should be glad, if I had the requisite space, to repeat in detail the interesting and vivid account of life in the Kará prisons that was given me at Miss Armfeldt's house that day; but six or eight hours' conversation cannot be put into a chapter or two, and I must content myself with a brief narrative of my personal experience, and a short outline

sketch of the life of political convicts at the mines of Kará between the years 1880 and 1885.

I made my last call at the house of the Armfeldts on the afternoon of November 7th, just twenty-four hours after I first entered it. I was well aware that the return of Major Pótulof that night would put a stop to my visits, and that, in all probability, I should never see these unfortunate people again; while they, knowing that this was their last opportunity to talk with one who was going back to the civilized world and would meet their relatives and friends, clung to me with an eagerness that was almost pathetic. I promised the Armfeldts that I would call upon Count Leo Tolstói and describe to him their life and circumstances,<sup>1</sup> left my address with them so that they might communicate with me should they ever have an opportunity to write, and took letters from them to their relatives in European Russia. It may perhaps seem to the reader that in carrying letters to and from political convicts in Siberia I ran an unnecessary and unjustifiable risk, inasmuch as the act was a penal offense, and if discovered would probably have led to our arrest, to the confiscation of all our papers, and, at the very least, to our immediate expulsion from the Empire under guard. I fully appreciated the danger, but, nevertheless, I could not refuse to take such letters. If you were a political convict at the mines, and had a wife or a mother in European Russia to whom you had not been allowed to write for years, and if I, an American trav-

<sup>1</sup> I kept this promise, and told Count Tolstói all that he seemed to care to hear with regard to the Armfeldts' situation. He manifested, however, a disinclination to listen to accounts of suffering among the political convicts in Eastern Siberia; would not read manuscripts that I brought expressly to show him; and said distinctly that while he felt sorry for many of the politicals he could not help them, and was not at all in sympathy with their methods. They had resorted, he said,

to violence, and they must expect to suffer from violence. I was told in Moscow that when Madam Uspénskaya, wife of one of the political convicts at Kará, went to Count Tolstói to solicit a contribution of money to be used in ameliorating, as far as possible, the condition of politicals at the mines, she met with a decided refusal. The Count was not willing, apparently, to show even a benevolent and charitable sympathy with men and women whose actions he wholly disapproved.



eler, should come to you and ask you to put yourself in my power and run the risk of recommittal to prison and leg-fetters by telling me all that I wanted to know, and if I should then refuse to carry a letter to your mother or your wife, you would think that I must be either very cowardly or very hard-hearted. I could not refuse to do it. If they were willing to run the risk of writing such letters, I was willing to run the risk of carrying them. I always consented, and sometimes volunteered to take them, although I was perfectly well aware that they would cause me many anxious hours.

Just before dark I bade the Armfeldts and the other members of the free command good-by, telling them that I should try to see them once more, but that I feared it would be impossible. Major Pótulof did not return until midnight, and I did not see him until the next morning. We met for the first time at breakfast. He greeted me courteously, but formally, omitting the customary handshake, and I felt at once a change in the social atmosphere. After bidding me good-morning, he sat for ten or fifteen minutes looking moodily into his tea-cup without speaking a word. I had anticipated this situation and had decided upon a course of action. I felt sincere regard for Major Pótulof, he had treated us very kindly, I understood perfectly that I had placed him in an awkward and unpleasant position, and I intended to deal with him frankly and honestly. I therefore broke the silence by saying that, during his absence, I had made the acquaintance of the political convicts of the free command.

"Yes," he said, without raising his eyes from his tea-cup, "I heard so; and," he continued, after a moment's pause, "it is my duty to say to you that you have acted very rashly."

"Why?" I inquired.

"Because," he replied, "the Government looks with great suspicion upon foreigners who secretly make the acquaintance of the political convicts. It is not allowed, and you will get yourself into serious trouble."

"But," I said, "no one has ever told me that it was not allowed. I can hardly be supposed, as a foreigner, to know that I have no right to speak to people who are practically at liberty, and whom I am liable to meet any day in the village street. The members of the free command are not in prison; they are walking about the settlement in freedom. Everybody else can talk to them; why cannot I?"

"I received a telegram," he said gravely, "from Governor Barabásh" (the governor of the territory of the Trans-Baikál in which the mines of Kará are situated) "saying that you were not to be allowed to see the political prison, and, of course, it was the governor's intention that you should not see the political convicts."

"You did not tell me so," I replied. "If you had told me that you had received such a telegram from the governor, it would have had great weight with me. I cannot remember that you ever intimated to me that I could not visit the members of the free command."

"I did not know that you were thinking of such a thing," he rejoined. "You said nothing about it. However," he continued, after a moment's pause, "it is Captain Nikólin's affair; he has the politicals in charge. All that I have to do is to warn you that you are acting imprudently and running a great risk."

I then explained to Major Pótulof frankly why I had said nothing to him about my intentions, and why I had taken advantage of his absence to carry them into effect. If I had said to him beforehand that I wished or intended to see the political convicts, he would have been obliged either to approve or to disapprove. If he had disapproved, I, as his guest, should have been bound in honor to respect his wishes and authority; while, if he had approved, he would have incurred a responsibility for my illegal action that I did not wish to throw upon him. I admitted knowledge of the fact that my intercourse with the politicals would not have been permitted if it had been foreseen, and told him that my only reasons for making their acquaintance secretly

in the way I had were first, to avoid interference, and secondly, to relieve him as far as possible from any suspicion of complicity. "Nobody now," I said, "can accuse you of having had anything to do with it. You were not here, and it is perfectly evident that I waited for the opportunity that your absence gave me." My explanation seemed to mollify him a little, and his old cordial manner gradually returned; but he warned me again that secret intercourse with political convicts, if I continued it, would almost certainly get me into trouble.

An hour or two after breakfast I was surprised and a little startled by the sudden reappearance of Captain Nikólin, the gendarme commandant of the political prison. He desired to see Major Pótulof on business, and they were closeted together for half or three-quarters of an hour in the major's writing-room. I was, at the time, in another part of the house trying to write up my notes; but Mr. Frost was at work upon a crayon portrait of the major's children in the drawing-room, off which the writing-room opened. At the first opportunity after Captain Nikólin's departure Mr. Frost came to me in some anxiety and whispered to me that he had accidentally overheard a part of the conversation between Captain Nikólin and Major Pótulof in the writing-room, and that it indicated trouble. It related to my intercourse with the political convicts, and turned upon the question of searching our baggage and examining my papers and note-books. As Mr. Frost understood it, Captain Nikólin insisted that such an investigation was proper and necessary, while Major Pótulof defended us, deprecated the proposed search, and tried to convince the gendarme officer that it would be injudicious to create such a scandal as an examination of our baggage would cause. The discussion closed with the significant remark from Nikólin that if the search were not made in Kará it certainly would be made somewhere else. Mr. Frost seemed to be much alarmed, and I was not a little troubled myself. I did not so much fear a search,—at least while we re-

mained in Major Pótulof's house,—but what I did fear was being put upon my word of honor by Major Pótulof himself as to the question whether I had any letters from the political convicts. I thought it extremely probable that he would come to me at the first opportunity and say to me good-humoredly, “George Ivánovich, Captain Nikólin has discovered your relations with the political convicts; he knows that you spent with them the greater part of one night, and he thinks that you may have letters from them. He came here this morning with a proposition to search your baggage. Of course, as you are my guests, I defended you and succeeded in putting him off; but I think under the circumstances it is only fair you should assure me, on your word of honor, that you have no such letters.”

In such an exigency as that I should have to do one of two things—either lie outright, upon my word of honor, to the man in whose house I was a guest, or else betray people who had trusted me, and for whom I had already come to feel sincere sympathy and affection. Either alternative was intolerable—unthinkable—and yet I must decide upon some course of action at once. The danger was imminent, and I could not bring myself to face either of the alternatives upon which I should be forced if put upon my word of honor. I might perhaps have had courage enough to run the risk, so far as my own papers were concerned, but I knew that the letters in my possession, if discovered, would send Miss Armfeldt and all the other writers back into prison; would leave poor, feeble Mrs. Armfeldt alone in a penal settlement with a new sorrow; and would lead to a careful examination of all my papers, and thus bring misfortune upon scores of exiles and officers in other parts of Siberia who had furnished me with documentary materials. All the rest of that day I was in a fever of anxiety and irresolution. I kept, so far as possible, out of Major Pótulof's way; gave him no opportunity to speak to me alone; went to bed early on plea of a headache; and spent a wretched and sleepless night trying to decide upon a



course of action. I thought of a dozen different methods of concealing the letters, but concealment would not meet the emergency. If put upon my word of honor I should have to admit that I had them, or else lie in the most cowardly and treacherous way. I did not dare to mail them, since all the mail matter from the house passed through Major Pótulof's hands, and by giving them to him I might precipitate the very inquiries I wished to avoid. At last, just before daybreak, I decided to destroy them. I had no opportunity, of course, to consult the writers, but I felt sure that they would approve my action if they could know all the circumstances. It was very hard to destroy letters upon which those unfortunate people had hung so many hopes,—letters that I knew would have such priceless value to fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers in Russia,—but there was nothing else to be done. The risk of keeping them had become too great to be justifiable.

As soon as I had come to a decision, I was confronted by the question, "How are the letters to be destroyed?" Since the discovery of my secret relations with the political convicts I had been more closely watched than ever. My room had no door that could be closed, but was separated from the hall, and from Major Pótulof's sitting-room, merely by a light portière. Its large curtainless window was almost on a level with the ground, and an armed sentry, who stood night and day at the front entrance of the house, could see through it. If I tore the letters into small bits, they might be found and pieced together. If I burned them, the odor of the burning paper would be at once diffused through the house; and, besides that, I was likely to be caught in the act, either by the sentry, or by Major Pótulof himself, who, on one pretext or another, was constantly coming into my room without knock or announcement. There happened to be in the room a large brick oven, and about half an hour after I got up that morning a soldier came in to make a fire in it. The thought at once occurred to me that by watching for a favorable opportu-

nity, when Major Pótulof was talking with Mr. Frost in the sitting-room and the sentry was out of sight, I could throw the letters unobserved into this fire. As I walked out into the hall to see that the coast was clear there, I noiselessly unlatched the iron door of the oven and threw it ajar. Then returning and assuring myself that the sentry was not in a position to look through the window, I tossed the letters quickly into the oven upon a mass of glowing coals. Five minutes later there was not a trace of them left. I then erased or put into cipher many of the names of persons in my note-books and prepared myself, as well as I could, for a search.

There were two things in my personal experience at the mines of Kará that I now particularly regret, and one of them is the burning of these letters. I did not see the political convicts again, I had no opportunity to explain to them the circumstances under which I acted, and explanations, even if I could make them, are now, in many cases, too late. Miss Nathalie Armfeldt died of prison consumption at the mines a little more than a year after I bade her good-by; her old mother soon followed her to the grave, and the letters that I destroyed may have been the last that they had an opportunity to write. I was not put upon my word of honor, I was not searched, and I might have carried those letters safely to their destination, as I afterward carried many others.

The next unfortunate thing in my Kará experience was my failure to see Dr. Orest E. Véimar, one of the most distinguished political convicts in the free command, who, at the time of our visit, was dying of prison consumption. He was a surgeon, about thirty-five years of age, and resided, before his exile, in a large house of his own on the Névski Prospékt near the Admiralty Place in St. Petersburg. He was a man of wealth and high social standing, occupied an official position in the medical department of the Ministry of the Interior, and was, at one time, a personal friend of her Majesty, the present Empress. He was

in charge of her field-hospital throughout the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, was made a cavalier of the order of St. Anne for distinguished services in that campaign, received



DR. VÉMAR.

the cross of Vladímir and the cross of Stánislaus "with swords" for gallantry on the field of battle, and was greatly beloved by General Gurkó, with whom he made the passage of the Balkáns.



He was arrested in St. Petersburg on April 2, 1879, and was thrown into one of the casemates of the fortress of Petropávlovsk. He lay there, in the strictest solitary confinement, until May, 1880—almost a year—and was then tried by court-martial upon the charge of political conspiracy. He pleaded not guilty, and declared that he had never had any relations with the revolutionary party; but he was convicted, nevertheless, upon fragmentary and misinterpreted circumstantial evidence, and condemned to fifteen years of penal servitude with deprivation of all civil rights and banishment to Siberia for life.<sup>1</sup> At the time of his trial the *London Times*, in a column editorial upon his case, said:

Our correspondent at St. Petersburg, in a dispatch we publish this morning, telegraphs the sentences passed yesterday on the prisoners charged with participation in the Nihilist conspiracy. Western observers can see in these state trials at St. Petersburg nothing but a shameful travesty of justice. The whole of these proceedings are an example of the way in which any one can govern by the aid of a state of siege. Military justice has had, as a rule, the merit of being sharp and sudden, but the military justice of the Russian courts has been as cruel in its dilatoriness as grossly illogical in its methods and terribly severe in its sentences. . . . Among the accused who were condemned yesterday, Dr. Véimar was in every way a man of whom his country seemed to have reason to be proud. He is in personal bearing a gallant gentleman. As a physician he has devoted his time and skill to the service of his suffering countrymen. He is (or was till yesterday, for to-day he is a drudge in the deadly mines) decorated with Russian and Roumanian orders, and with the medal for the Turkish war. He was with the troops who crossed the Balkans under Gurkó—a splendid feat of arms. The charges against this gentleman, the way in which the case was got up and pressed, would seem exaggerated in the wildest burlesque. The humors of injustice were never carried so far, if

<sup>1</sup> The official report of the trial of Dr. Véimar, and a number of other political offenders arraigned with him, will be found in the St. Petersburg newspaper *Gólos* for May, 1880, numbers 133-138. It was the opinion of all the officers of the exile administration who knew Dr. Véimar in Siberia that he was an innocent man unjustly condemned. Major Pótulof and Colonel Nóvikof expressed this belief to me very strongly.



we may trust the reports of the trial, by Bunyan's *Mr. Justice Hategood* or Rabelais's *Grippeminaud*. . . . Witnesses were brought forward to speak to the character of Dr. Véimar. Their testimony was a shower of praises, both as to his moral character and his bravery in war. This was inconvenient for the prosecution. Supposing the charges against Dr. Véimar true, it would appear that an exemplary citizen so despaired of the condition of his country that he conspired with miscreants like Solivióf and aided other dastardly assassins. It might have been surmised that the prosecution would bring evidence to damage the character of the accused, or at least to show that the praise heaped on him was undeserved. Nothing of the sort. The prosecutor said, "Gentlemen, I could have produced a series of witnesses whose testimony would have been quite the reverse. Unfortunately, all of them are absent." A military court could hardly avoid taking the word of the presiding general, but the whole proceeding, the whole conception of testimony and justice, are only to be paralleled in the burlesque trial witnessed by Alice in Mr. Carroll's fairy tale. . . . No case could bear more direct evidence to the terrible condition of Russian society and Russian justice. Either a man who seems to have been an exemplary citizen in other respects was driven by despotism into secret and dastardly treason, or Dr. Véimar is falsely condemned and unjustly punished. In either alternative, if the reports of his trial are correct, that trial was a scandal even to military law.

After sentence had been pronounced, Dr. Véimar was taken back to the fortress, and lay there, in what is known as "the penal servitude section," for nine months more. The dampness and bad sanitary condition of his cell finally broke down his health, and in February, 1881, he was found to be suffering from pleurisy and scurvy, and was removed to the House of Preliminary Detention. At last, in August, 1881, after more than two years of solitary confinement, he was sent, still sick, to the mines of Kará.

The Crown Princess Dagmár (now the Empress), whose hospital Dr. Véimar had managed during the Russo-Turkish war, took a deep personal interest in him, and was a firm believer in his innocence; but even she could not save him. When she came to the throne, however, as Empress, in

1881, she sent Colonel Nord to the mines of Kará to see Dr. Véimar and offer him his freedom upon condition that he give his word of honor not to engage in any activity hostile to the Government. Dr. Véimar replied that he would not so bind himself while he was in ignorance of the state of affairs under the new Tsar (Alexander III.). If the Government would allow him to return to St. Petersburg, on parole or under guard, and see what the condition of Russia then was, he would give them a definite answer to their proposition; that is, he would accept freedom upon the terms offered, or he would go back to the mines. He would not, however, bind himself to anything until he had had an opportunity to ascertain how Russia was then being governed. Colonel Nord had a number of interviews with him, and tried in every way to shake his resolution, but without avail.

When Mr. Frost and I reached the mines of Kará, Dr. Véimar had been released from prison on a ticket of leave, but was dying of consumption brought on by the intolerable conditions of Siberian prison life. The political convicts wished and proposed to take me to see him the night that I was at Miss Armfeldt's house, but they represented him as very weak, hardly able to speak aloud, and likely at any moment to die; and after I saw the effect that my sudden appearance produced upon Miss Armfeldt and the other politicals who were comparatively well, I shrank from inflicting upon a dying man, at midnight, such a shock of surprise and excitement. I had occasion afterward bitterly to regret my lack of resolution. Dr. Véimar died before I had another opportunity to see him, and six months later, when I returned to St. Petersburg on my way home from Siberia, I received a call from a cultivated and attractive young woman to whom, at the time of his banishment, he was engaged. She had heard that I was in Kará when her betrothed died, and she had come to me hoping that I had brought her a letter, or at least some farewell message from him. She was making preparations, in November of

the previous year, to undertake a journey of four thousand miles alone, in order to join him at the mines and marry him, when she received a telegram from Captain Nikólin briefly announcing his death. Although more than six months had elapsed since that time, she had heard nothing else. Neither Dr. Véimar before his death, nor his convict friends after his death, had been permitted to write to her, and upon me she had hung her last hopes. How hard it was for me to tell her that I *might* have seen him—that I *might* have brought her, from his death-bed, one last assurance of love and remembrance,—but that I had not done so, the reader can perhaps imagine. I have had some sad things to do in my life, but a sadder duty than this never was laid upon me.

I afterward spent a whole evening with her at her house. She related to me the story of Dr. Véimar's heroic and self-sacrificing life, read me letters that he had written to her from battlefields in Bulgaria, and finally, with a face streaming with tears, brought out and showed to me the most sacred and precious relic of him that she had—a piece of needlework that he had made in his cell at the mines, and had succeeded in smuggling through to her as a little present and a token of his continued remembrance and love. It was a strip of coarse cloth, such as that used for convict shirts, about three inches wide and nearly fifty feet in length, embroidered from end to end in tasteful geometrical patterns with the coarsest and cheapest kind of colored linen thread.

“Mr. Kennan,” she said to me, trying in vain to choke down her sobs, “imagine the thoughts that have been sewn into that piece of embroidery!”

We remained at the mines of Kará four or five days after our last visit to the house of the Arnfeldts, but as we were constantly under close surveillance, we could accomplish nothing. All that there is left for me to do, therefore, is to throw into systematic form the information that I obtained there, and to give a few chapters

from the long and terrible history of the Kará penal establishment.<sup>1</sup>

The Russian Government began sending state criminals to the mines of Kará in small numbers as early as 1873, but it did not make a regular practice of so doing until 1879. Most of the politicals condemned to penal servitude before the latter date were held either in the "penal-servitude section" of the Petropávlovsk fortress at St. Petersburg, or in the solitary confinement cells of the central convict prison at Kharkóf. As the revolutionary movement, however, grew more and more serious and widespread, and the prisons of European Russia became more and more crowded with political offenders, the Minister of the Interior began to transfer the worst class of hard-labor state criminals to the mines of Kará, where they were imprisoned in buildings intended originally for common felons.<sup>2</sup> In December, 1880, there were about fifty political convicts in the Kará prisons, while nine men who had finished their term of probation were living outside the prison walls in

<sup>1</sup> Nearly all of the statements made in this and the following chapter have been carefully verified, and most of them rest upon unimpeachable official testimony. There may be trifling errors in some of the details, but, in the main, the story can be proved, even in a Russian court of justice. The facts with regard to Colonel Kononóvich and his connection with the Kará prisons and mines were obtained partly from political convicts and partly from officials in Kará, Chíta, Irkútsk, and St. Petersburg. The letter in which Kononóvich resigned his position as governor of the Kará penal establishment is still on file in the Ministry of the Interior, and all the circumstances of his retirement are known, not only to the political convicts, but to many of the officials with whom I have talked. I regret that I am restrained by prudential and other considerations from citing my authorities. I could greatly

strengthen my case by showing—as I might show—that I obtained my information from persons fully competent to furnish it, and persons whose positions were a sufficient guarantee of impartiality.

<sup>2</sup> The political prison was not in existence at that time, and the state criminals were distributed among the common-criminal prisons, where they occupied what were called the "seeret" or solitary-confinement cells. At a somewhat later period an old detached building in Middle Kará was set apart for their accommodation, and most of them lived together there in a single large *kámara*. They were treated in general like common convicts, were required to work every day in the gold placers, and at the expiration of their term of probation were released from confinement and enrolled in the free command.



little huts and cabins of their own. Most of the male prisoners were forced to go with the common felons to the gold placers; but as the hours of labor were not unreasonably long, they regarded it as a pleasure and a privilege, rather than a hardship, to get out of the foul atmosphere of their prison cells and work six or eight hours a day in the sunshine and the open air.

The officer in command of the Kará penal establishment at that time was Colonel Kononóvich, a highly educated, humane, and sympathetic man, who is still remembered by many a state criminal in Eastern Siberia with gratitude and respect. He was not a revolutionist, nor was he in sympathy with revolution; but he recognized the fact that many of the political convicts were refined and cultivated men and women, who had been exasperated and frenzied by injustice and oppression, and that although their methods might be ill-judged and mistaken, their motives, at least, were disinterested and patriotic. He treated them, therefore, with kindness and consideration, and lightened so far as possible for every one of them the heavy burden of life. There were in the Kará prisons at that time several state criminals who, by order of the gendarmerie and as a disciplinary punishment, had been chained to wheelbarrows.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Kononóvich could not bear to see men of high character and education subjected to so degrading and humiliating a punishment; and although he could not free them from it without authority from St. Petersburg, he gave directions that they should be released from their wheelbarrows whenever he made a visit of inspection to

<sup>1</sup> This is a punishment still authorized by law, and one still inflicted upon convicts who are serving out life sentences. The prisoner is fastened to a small miner's wheelbarrow by a chain, attached generally to the middle link of his leg-fetter. This chain is long enough to give him some freedom of movement, but he cannot walk for exercise, nor cross his cell, without

trundling his wheelbarrow before him. Even when he lies down to sleep, the wheelbarrow remains attached to his feet. Four politicals have been chained to wheelbarrows at Kará, namely: Popko, Berezniúk, Foníchev, and Shehedrín. The last of them was not released until 1884. Whether or not any have been thus punished since that time I do not know.

the prison, so that at least he should not be compelled to see them in that situation. The humane disposition and sensitiveness to human suffering of which this is an illustration characterized all the dealings of Colonel Kononóvich with the political convicts; and so long as he was permitted to treat them with reasonable kindness and consideration he did so treat them, because he recognized the fact that their life was hard enough at best. Late in the year 1880, however, the Minister of the Interior began to issue a series of orders intended, apparently, to restrict the privileges of the state criminals and render their punishment more severe. They were forbidden, in the first place, to have any written communication whatever with their relatives. To such of them as had wives, children, fathers, or mothers in European Russia, this of itself was a terrible as well as an unjustifiable privation. Then they were forbidden to work in the gold placers, and were thus deprived of the only opportunity they had to see the outside world, to breathe pure, fresh air, and to strengthen and invigorate their bodies with exercise. Finally, about the middle of December, 1880, the governor received an order to abolish the free command, send all its members back into prison, half shave their heads, and put them again into chains and leg-fetters.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Kononóvich regarded this order as unnecessarily and even brutally severe, and tried in every way to have it rescinded or modified. His efforts, however, were unavailing, and

<sup>1</sup> All of these orders were issued while the Liberal Lóris-Mélikof was Minister of the Interior, and I have never been able to get any explanation of the inconsistency between his general policy towards the Liberal party and his treatment of condemned state criminals. Some of the officials whom I questioned in Siberia said without hesitation it was the minister's intention to make the life of the political convicts harder; while others thought that he acted without full information and upon the assumption that modern

politicals were no more deserving of sympathy than were the Decembrists of 1825. The Decembrist conspirators—although high nobles—were harshly treated, therefore Nihilists should be harshly treated. Many of the political exiles whom I met in Siberia regarded Lóris-Mélikof's professions of sympathy with the Liberal and reforming party as insincere and hypocritical; but my own impression is that he acted in this case upon somebody's advice, without giving the matter much thought or consideration.

on the 28th of December he called the members of the free command together, read the order to them, told them that he had failed to obtain any modification of it, but said that he would, on his own personal responsibility, allow them three days more of freedom in which to settle up their domestic affairs. On the morning of January 1, 1881, they must report at the prison. To all the members of the free command this order was a terrible blow. For two years they had been living in comparative freedom in their own little cabins, many of them with their wives and children, who had made a journey of five thousand miles across Siberia in order to join them. At three days' warning they were to be separated from their families, sent back into prison, and put again into chains and leg-fetters. Some of them were leaving their wives and children alone and unprotected in a penal settlement, some of them were broken in health and could not expect to live long in the close confinement of a prison *kámara*, and all of them looked forward with dread to the chains, leg-fetters, foul air, vermin, and miseries innumerable of prison life.

In the free command, at that time, was living a young lawyer, thirty-three years of age, named Eugene Semyónofski. He was the son of a well-known surgeon in Kiev, and had been condemned to penal servitude for having been connected in some way with the "underground" revolutionary journal *Onward*. He was a man of high character and unusual ability, had had a university training, and at the time of his arrest was practising law in St. Petersburg. After four or five years of penal servitude at the mines his health gave way, and in 1879 he was released from prison and enrolled in the free command. At the last meeting of the political convicts and their wives, on New Year's Eve, it was noticed that Semyónofski seemed to be greatly depressed, and that when they parted he bade his comrades good-by with unusual manifestations of emotion and affection. About two o'clock that morning Mr. Charúshin, a political convict in whose little cabin Semyónofski was

living, was awakened by the report of a pistol, and rushing into the room of Semyónofski found that the latter had shot himself through the head. He was still living, but he did not recover consciousness, and died in about an hour. On the table lay a letter addressed to his father, with a note to Charúshin asking him to forward it, if possible, to its destination. The letter was as follows:

MINES OF KARÁ,

Night of December 31, January 1, 1880-1.

MY DEAR FATHER: I write you just after my return from watching the old year out and the new year in with all my comrades. We met, this New Year, under melancholy and disheartening circumstances. You have probably received a letter from the wife of one of my comrades, whom I requested to inform you that we had been forbidden thenceforth to write letters to any one—even our parents. Senseless and inhuman as that prohibition was, there awaited us something much worse—something that I knew nothing about when that letter was written. Ten days or so after we received notice of the order forbidding us to write letters, we were informed that we were all to be returned to prison and confined in chains and leg-fetters. There are nine men of us, namely: Shishkó, Charúshin, Kviatkóvski, Uspénski, Soyúzof, Bogdánof, Teréntief, Tévtul, and I; and we have all been living about two years in comparative freedom outside the prison. We expected something of this kind from the very day that we heard of the order of Lóris-Mélikof prohibiting our correspondence; because there was in that order a paragraph which led us to fear that we should not be left in peace. To-morrow we are to go back to prison. But for the faith that Colonel Kononóvich has in us we should have been arrested and imprisoned as soon as the order was received; but he trusted us and gave us a few days in which to settle up our affairs. We have availed ourselves of this respite to meet together, for the last time in freedom, to watch the old year out and the new year in. I shall avail myself of it for yet another purpose. I do not know whether the carrying out of that purpose will, or will not, be a betrayal of the confidence that Colonel Kononóvich has reposed in us; but even if I knew that it would be such a betrayal I should still carry out my purpose.

It may be that some one who reads the words "they are going back to prison" will compare us to sheep, submissively presenting their throats to the knife of the butcher; but such a comparison



would be a grievously mistaken one. The only means of escape from such a situation as ours is in flight—and how and whither could we fly, in a temperature of thirty-five degrees below zero, and without any previous preparation for such an undertaking? The reason why no preparations have been made you know, if you received the letter that I wrote you last August.

My own personal determination was to attempt an escape if the order for our return to prison should come in the spring, when it would be possible to escape, and to do it, not on the spur of the moment, but after serious preparation. It has not, however, happened so. In the meantime I feel that my physical strength is failing day by day. I know that my weakness must soon have its effect upon my mental powers, and that I am threatened with the danger of becoming a complete imbecile—and all this while I am living outside the prison. The question arises, what would become of me *in prison*? My whole life rests on the hope of returning some time to Russia and serving, with all my soul, the cause of right and justice to which I long ago devoted myself; but how can that cause be served by a man who is mentally and physically wrecked? When the hope of rendering such service is taken away from me, what is there left? Personal self-justification? But before the moment comes for anything like complete satisfaction of that desire, they can put me ten times to the torture. I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that there is no longer anything to live for—that I have earned the right, at last, to put an end to sufferings that have become aimless and useless. I have long been tired—deathly tired—of life; and only the thought of home has restrained me, hitherto, from self-destruction. I know that I am about to cause terrible grief, Sáscha,<sup>1</sup> to you, and to all who love me; but is not your love great enough to forgive the suicide of a man tortured to the last extremity? Understand that, for God's sake! I have been literally tortured to death during these last years. For the sake of all that you hold dear, I beseech you to forgive me! You must know that my last thoughts are of you—that if I had a little more strength I would live out my life, if only to save you from further suffering; but my strength is exhausted. There is nothing left for me to do but to go insane or die; and the latter alternative is, after all, better than the former.

Good-by, forever, my dear, kind, well-remembered father and friend! Good-by, Sáscha, and you my younger brother, whom I

<sup>1</sup> "Sáscha" was Semyónofski's brother Alexander

know so little. Remember that it is better to die, even as I die, than to live without being able to feel one's self a man of principle and honor.

Once more, good-by! Do not think ill of your unhappy son and brother, who, even in his unhappiness, finds consolation.

EUGENE.

All that was mortal of Eugene Semyónofski now lies in the political convicts' burying-ground on a lonely hill known as "The Convict's Head" in Eastern Siberia. The unpainted wooden cross that marks his grave will soon decay, and then nothing will remain to show where lie the ashes of a man whose brilliant talents, high standards of duty, and intense moral earnestness might have made him an honor to his country and an invaluable worker in the cause of freedom and humanity.

Among the most gifted and attractive of the women who were in penal servitude at the mines of Kará when the free command was sent back to prison was Márya Pávlovna Kavaléfskaya—born Vorontsóf—who was arrested with Miss Armfeldt in Kiev in 1879. She was the daughter of Paul Vorontsóf, a landed proprietor [*poméishchik*] in the south of Russia, and was the sister of Basil Vorontsóf, a well-known Russian political economist.<sup>1</sup> She had a liberal education, and was characterized as a girl by tenacity of purpose, generous feeling, and a sensitive nervous organization. Her brother's interest in political economy led her at a comparatively early age to study the problems presented by Russian life, and even before her marriage she made an attempt, by opening a peasant school, to do something to improve the condition of the great ignorant mass of the Russian common people. At the age of twenty-two or twenty-three she married a teacher in one of the gymnasias or high schools of Kiev named Kavaléfski—a man of culture and refinement, who at one time had been a mem-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Vorontsóf is the author of political economy in the Russian magazines *European Messenger*, *Annals of the Fatherland*, and *Russian Thought*.



MADAM KAVALÉFSKAYA.

ber of the city council of Odéssa, and who was generally respected and esteemed. They lived together happily and had one child—a little girl whom they named “Hallie.”

I will not now attempt to trace the series of steps by which Madam Kavaléfskaya passed from the position of a

moderate liberal to the position of a revolutionist. After trying, again and again, by peaceful and legal methods, to remedy some of the evils that she saw about her, and after being opposed and thwarted at every step by the censorship of the press, the police, and the Russian bureaucratic system, she became satisfied that nothing could be done without a change in the existing form of government; and she therefore joined one of the secret revolutionary circles in Kiev. This circle was surprised and captured by the police in February, 1879, and Madam Kavaléfski was condemned as a revolutionist to thirteen years and four months of penal servitude, with exile to Siberia for life and deprivation of all civil rights. Professor Kavaléfskaya was not present at the meeting that was broken up by the police, and there was no proof that he had taken any active part in the revolutionary movement; but he was exiled by administrative process, nevertheless, to the little town of Minusínsk, in Eastern Siberia, nearly a thousand miles distant from the mines to which his wife was sent. Their little daughter Hallie was left in Kiev in the care of one of Madam Kavaléfskaya's sisters.

The long and terrible journey of nearly 5000 miles to the mines of Kará, the separation from her husband and child, and the hardships and loneliness of penal servitude broke down Madam Kavaléfskaya's health and strength; and in the autumn of 1880 she began to show signs of mental alienation. She had been allowed, up to that time, to correspond with her family; and I happen to have in my possession a copy of one of the letters that she received from her little daughter Hallie, who was then at school in Kiev. I have not space to describe the way in which this letter, with other documents, was smuggled out of Madam Kavaléfskaya's cell and put into my hands; but I will quote it, in order to show how, by means of such letters, the bleeding wounds of the poor woman's life were kept open until her brain could no longer bear the torture. If you will imagine Madam Kavaléfskaya in penal servitude at the



mines of Kará, separated forever from her only child, and yet receiving from the latter such letters as this, you will understand, perhaps, how she was, at last, driven insane. To what extent the little girl Hallie realized the situation of her mother sufficiently appears from the naïve, childish letter that she wrote her. It is as follows:

MY DEARLY LOVED PRECIOUS MOTHER: I wish you could see how pleasant the weather is here. I walk out every day, all along the bank of the river, and I enjoy it so much! You ask me to tell you about the other children. Well, first, there is Sásha. He is rather fat and good-looking, and he has nice eyes; but I think he is spoiled by petting. Then there is Dúnia. She is not very pretty, but she is a nice girl and I like her very much. The baby is only a year old. He creeps all over the floor; but he can walk holding on to somebody's hand, and he can say 'Papa,' 'Mama,' and 'Niánya' [nurse]. I love him most of all.

I am getting along in my studies pretty well. In history I am 5, grammar 5, German 4, and French 5; but, my dear mother, I must give you some sad news. In arithmetic I could n't do the sum that was given me, and so was marked 3, and did n't get the reward, which I hoped so to get because I knew how it would please aunt and you.

My dear mother, it is terrible to think how far you are from me—but how glad I am that you love me so. When I grow up and have children I will love them as you love me, and as I love you. My dearest little mother, my darling, my soul, I love you so much!

HALLIE.

Imagine Madam Kavaléfskaya in penal servitude at the mines, five thousand miles from her home, in shaken health, with no hope of ever returning to European Russia, with little hope even of living out her thirteen-year sentence, and in receipt of such a letter as this from her only child! I have often pictured to myself the contrast between what the child thought was "sad news"—that she could not do her sum in arithmetic—and the awful tragedy in the life of the mother.

In 1881, soon after the return of the free command to prison, Madam Kavaléfskaya went insane, shrieked con-

stantly, broke the windows of her cell, and became so violent that it was necessary to put her into a strait-jacket. A short time afterward, however, upon the intercession of a humane officer—I think of Colonel Kononóvich himself—she was permitted to join her husband in Minusínsk; and there, under more favorable conditions of life, she recovered her reason. About a year later she was regarded as sane enough to be again subjected to torture, and she was therefore returned to the mines. When she became once more “insubordinate” and unmanageable there, she was brought back to the Irkútsk prison, where, with Mesdames Róssikova, Kutitónskaya, and Bogomólets, she engaged in a hunger-strike that lasted sixteen days, and that brought all four of the women very near to death.<sup>1</sup> Some time in 1887 Madam Kavaléfskaya was sent for the third time to the mines, and in November, 1889, after the flogging to death of Madam Sigída, she committed suicide by taking poison.

When Madam Kavaléfskaya went insane in 1881, Colonel Kononóvich was still governor of the Kará penal establishment; the free command had just been returned to prison, and Semyónofski had just shot himself in the house of his friend Charúshin. Of course, Colonel Kononóvich was greatly shocked both by Semyónofski's suicide and by Madam Kavaléfskaya's insanity, but these were not the only tragedies that resulted from an enforcement of the Government's orders concerning the treatment of the political convicts. Soon after the self-destruction of Semyónofski, Uspénski, another political who had been sent back into prison, hanged himself in the prison bathhouse, while Ródin poisoned himself to death by drinking water in which he had soaked the heads of matches.

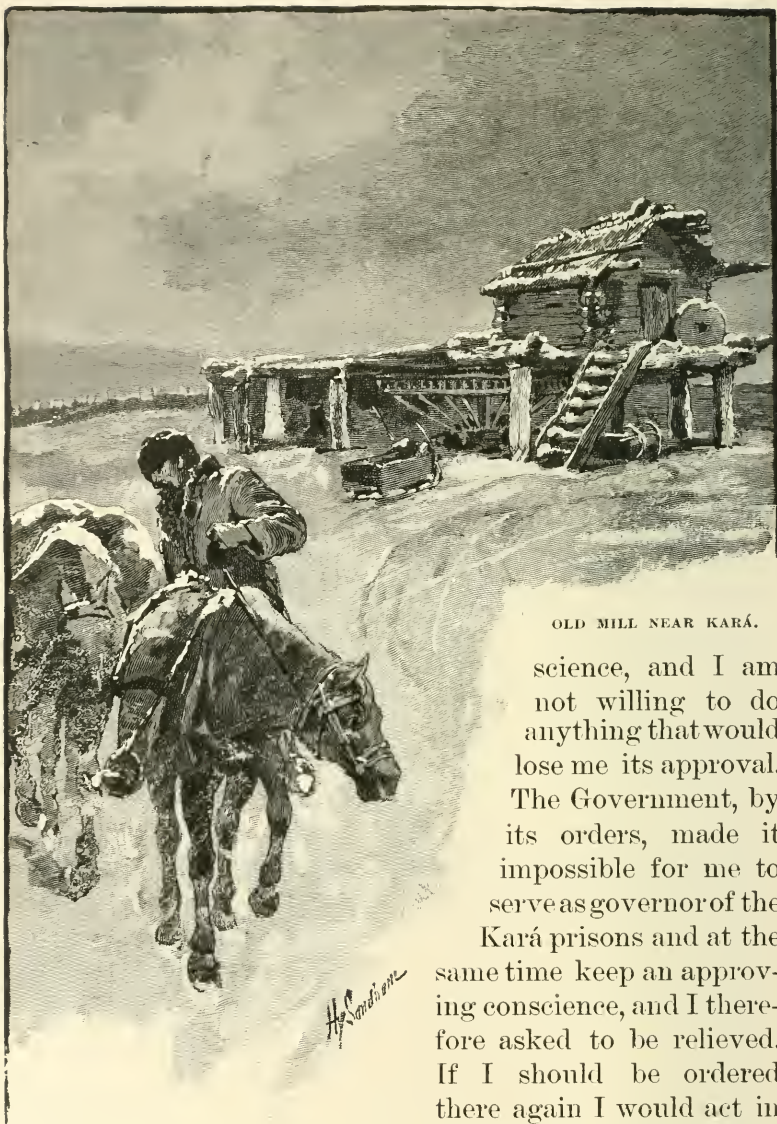
Colonel Kononóvich was too warm-hearted and sympathetic a man not to be profoundly moved by such terrible evidences of human misery. He determined to resign his position as governor of the Kará penal establishment,

<sup>1</sup> This hunger-strike was a protest against cruel treatment at the hands of the Irkútsk chief of police.

whatever might be the consequences; and in pursuance of this determination he wrote to the governor-general of Eastern Siberia and to the Minister of the Interior a very frank and bold letter, in which he said that he regarded the late instructions of the Government concerning the treatment of the political convicts as not only impolitic but cruel. If they wanted an officer who would treat the politicals in accordance with the spirit of such instructions, they had best send a hangman there. He, himself, was not a hangman; he could not enforce such orders without doing violence to all his feelings, and he must therefore ask to be relieved of his command. The resignation was accepted, and in the summer of 1881 Colonel Kononóvich left the mines of Kará, and some time afterwards returned to St. Petersburg. As he passed through Irkútsk he had an interview with Governor-general Anúchin, in the course of which the latter said to him, rather coldly and contemptuously, "Of course, Colonel Kononóvich, a man holding such views as you do could not be expected to act as governor of the Kará prisons and mines, and I doubt whether such a man can hold any position whatever in the Government service."

"Very well," replied Kononóvich, "then I will get out of it."

Soon after his arrival in St. Petersburg, Colonel Kononóvich had an interview with Mr. Dúrnovo, Assistant Minister of the Interior, in the course of which he said to the latter, "I did not relax any necessary discipline at Kará, nor did I violate or neglect to enforce any law. If you want to have good order among the political convicts at the mines, and to have your Government respected, you will have to send there men with convictions like mine. That I had no selfish aims in view you can understand from the fact that the course I pursued was dangerous to me. You have probably received not a few accusations made against me by other officers. I am not afraid of accusations, nor of opposition, but I do fear my own con-



OLD MILL NEAR KARÁ.

science, and I am not willing to do anything that would lose me its approval. The Government, by its orders, made it impossible for me to serve as governor of the Kará prisons and at the same time keep an approving conscience, and I therefore asked to be relieved. If I should be ordered there again I would act in precisely the same way."

The subsequent history of the Kará penal establishment must have made Mr. Dúrnovo think many times of these brave, frank words.



I have not been able to speak favorably of many Siberian prisons, nor to praise many Siberian officials; but it affords me pleasure to say that of Colonel Kononóvich I heard little that was not good. Political convicts, honest officers, and good citizens everywhere united in declaring that he was a humane, sympathetic, and warm-hearted man, as well as a fearless, intelligent, and absolutely incorruptible official. Nearly all the improvement that has been made in the Kará penal establishment within the past quarter of a century was made during Colonel Kononóvich's term of service as governor. In view of these facts I regret to have to say that he was virtually driven out of Siberia by the worst and most corrupt class of Russian bureaucratic officials. He was called "weak" and "sentimental"; he was accused of being a "socialist"; he was said to be in sympathy with the views of the political convicts; and the *isprávník* of Nérchinsk openly boasted, in the official club of that city, that he would yet "send Colonel Kononóvich to the province of Yakútsk with a yellow diamond on his back." How ready even high officers of the Siberian administration were to entertain the most trivial charges against him may be inferred from the following anecdote. During the last year of his service at Kará there came to the mines a political convict, hardly out of his teens, named Bíbikof. As a consequence of long-continued suffering and ill-treatment on the road, this young man was as wild, suspicious, and savage as a trapped wolf. He seemed to regard all the world as his enemies, and glared at every officer as if he expected a blow, was half afraid of it, but was prepared to die fighting. Colonel Kononóvich received him courteously and kindly; sent the wife of one of the political exiles to him with clean fresh underclothing; attended generally to his physical needs, and finally said to him, "Remember that nobody here will insult you or ill-treat you." The young convict was greatly surprised by such a reception, and in a letter that he subsequently wrote to a friend in European Russia he said, "I am glad to know, from the

little acquaintance I have had with Kononóvich, that a Russian colonel is not necessarily a beast." This letter fell into the hands of the police in European Russia, was forwarded through the Ministry of the Interior to General Ilyashévich, the governor of the Trans-Baikál, and was sent by that officer to Colonel Kononóvich with a request for an "explanation." It seemed to be regarded as documentary evidence that the governor of the Kará prisons was on suspiciously friendly terms with the political convicts. Kononóvich paid no attention to the communication. Some months later he happened to visit Chíta on business, and Governor Ilyashévich, in the course of a conversation about other matters, said to him, "By the way, Colonel Kononóvich, you have never answered a letter that I wrote you asking for an explanation of something said about you in a letter from one of the political convicts in your command. Did you receive it?"

"Yes," replied Kononóvich, "I received it; but what kind of answer did you look for? What explanation could I give? Did you expect me to excuse myself because somebody regarded me as a human being and not a beast? Was I to say that the writer of the letter was mistaken in supposing me to be a human being—that in reality I was a beast, and that I had never given him or anybody else reason to suppose that a Russian colonel could be a human being?"

This presentation of the case rather confused the governor, who said that the demand for an explanation had been written by his assistant, that it had been stupidly expressed, and that after all the matter was not of much consequence. He then dropped the subject.

After resigning his position at the mines of Kará, Colonel Kononóvich, who was a Cossack officer, went to Nérchinsk, where he took command of the Cossack forces of the Trans-Baikál. He soon discovered that a small knot of officers, including the *isprávník*, were engaged in selling immunity

from conscription—or, in other words, releasing, for two or three hundred *rúbles*, per capita, young men who had been legally drawn as conscripts and who should render military service. He undertook to bring the corrupt officials to justice; but they had strong and highly placed friends in Irkútsk, they trumped up a set of counter charges, packed the investigating commission with their own associates, and came very near sending Colonel Kononóvich to the province of Yakútsk “with a yellow diamond on his back,” in fulfilment of the *isprávník*'s boast. Fortunately Kononóvich had influential friends in St. Petersburg. He telegraphed to them and to the Minister of the Interior, and finally succeeded in securing the appointment of another commission, in having the *isprávník* and some of his confederates thrown into prison, and in obtaining documentary evidence of their guilt. The conspirators then caused his house to be set on fire in the middle of a cold winter night, and nearly burned him alive with all his family. He escaped in his night-clothing, and, as soon as he had gotten his wife and children out, rushed back to try to save the papers in the pending case against the *isprávník*, but it was too late. He was driven out by smoke and flames, and most of the proofs were destroyed. Colonel Kononóvich then “shook his hand” against Siberia—to use a Russian expression—and went to St. Petersburg. He did not want to live any longer, he said, in a country where an honest man could not do his duty without running the risk of being burned alive. In St. Petersburg he was given another position, as representative on the general staff of the Cossack forces of the Trans-Baikál, and he lived there quietly until the summer of 1888, when he was promoted to the rank of general and appointed to command the largest and most important penal establishment in Siberia; namely, that on the island of Saghalín. This appointment is in the highest degree creditable to the Russian Government, and, taken in connection with the erection of

the new prison in Vérkhni Údinsk, furnishes a gratifying proof that the Tsar is not wholly indifferent to the sufferings of Siberian exiles and convicts. As long as General Kononóvich remains in command of the Saghalín prisons and mines there is every reason to believe that they will be intelligently, honestly, and humanely managed.

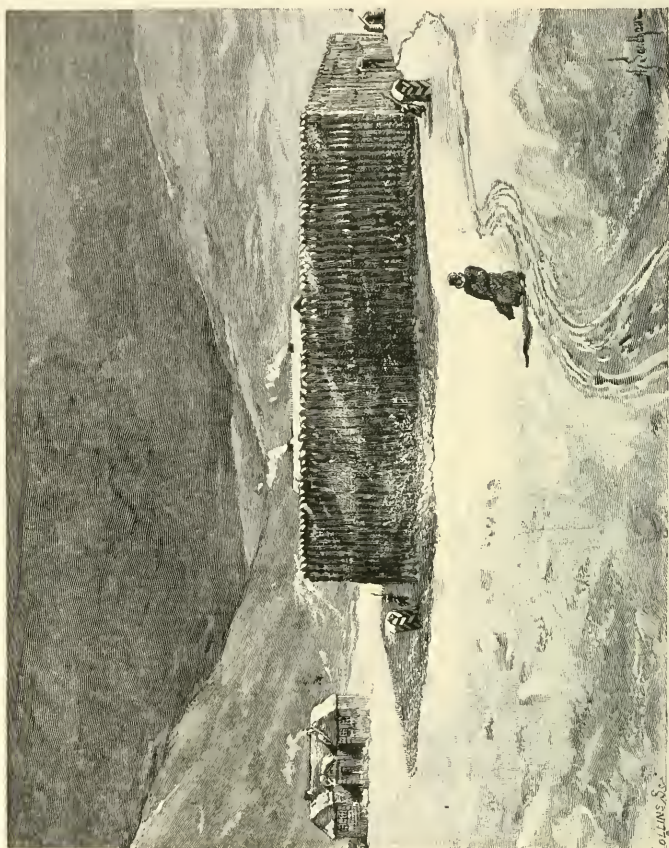


## CHAPTER VIII

### THE HISTORY OF THE KARÁ POLITICAL PRISON

ALMOST the last work that Colonel Kononóvich accomplished at the mines of Kará was the erection of the new political prison near the Lower Diggings. Captain Nikólin would not allow me to inspect this building, nor would he allow Mr. Frost to photograph it; but from convicts who had been confined in it I obtained the plan on page 225 and the picture on page 226, and from memory Mr. Frost drew the sketch on page 224. In general type it differs little from the common-criminal prisons, but it is larger, better lighted, and more spacious than the latter, and is, in all respects, a more comfortable place of abode. It contains four *kámeras*, exclusive of the hospital, or lazaret, and in each of them there are three windows, a large table, a brick oven, and sleeping-platform accommodations for about twenty-five men. There are no beds, except in the lazaret, and all the bed-clothing that the prisoners have was purchased with their own money. Originally the palisade did not entirely inclose the building, and the prisoners could look out of their front windows across the Kará valley; but Governor-general Anúchin, on the occasion of one of his rare visits to the mines, disapproved of this arrangement, remarked cynically that "A prison is not a palace," and ordered that the stockade of high, closely set logs be so extended as to cut off the view from the windows, and completely shut the building in. It is hard to see in this order anything but a deliberate intention on the part of a cruel official to make the life of the political convicts as miserable

and intolerable as possible. Every common-criminal prison in Kará, without exception, has windows that overlook the settlement or the valley; and every burglar and murderer in the whole penal establishment can see from his cell some-

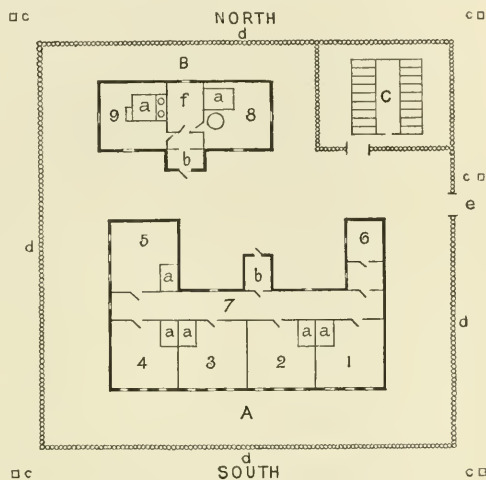


THE KARÁ POLITICAL PRISON.

thing of the outside world. The political convicts, however, in the opinion of the governor-general, had no right to live in a "palace" from which they could see the green trees, the glimmer of the sunshine on the water, and the tender purple of the distant hills at sunset or at dawn. They must be shut up in a tight box; the fresh invigorating breeze

from the mountains must be prevented from entering their grated windows; and the sight of a human being not clothed in a turnkey's uniform must never gladden their weary, homesick eyes. I have wished many times that his Excellency Governor-general Anúchin might be shut up for one year in the political prison at the mines of Kará; that he might look out for 365 days upon the weather-beaten logs of a high stockade; that he might lie for 365 nights on a bare sleeping-platform infested with vermin; and that he might breathe, night and day, for fifty-two consecutive weeks, the air of a close *kámara*, saturated with the poisonous stench of an uncovered excrement-bucket. Then he might say to himself, with a more vivid realization of its meaning, "A prison is not a palace."

When Colonel Kononóvich, in 1881, resigned his position as governor of the Kará penal establishment, his place was taken by Major Pótulof, who had previously been connected in some official capacity with the prison administration of the Nérchinsk silver mines. Shortly after Pótulof assumed command, all of the male political convicts, who then numbered about one hundred, were transferred to the new political prison erected by Colonel Kononóvich at the

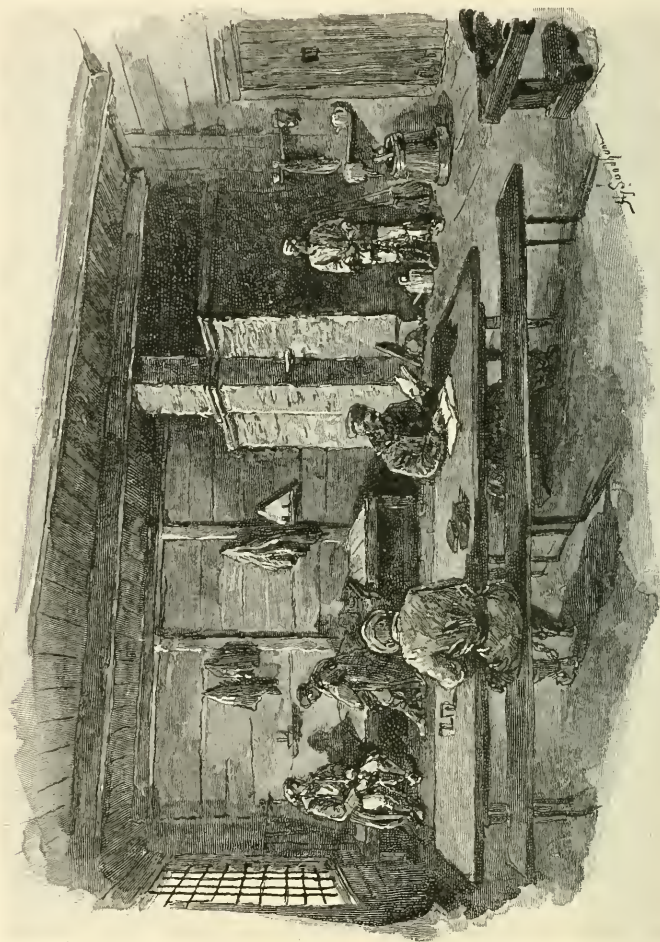


PLAN OF THE KARÁ POLITICAL PRISON.

A, Main Prison Building; B, Kitchen and Bath-house; C, Small Solitary-confinement cells, not now used; 1, 2, 3, 4, Large *kámara* or cells designated respectively by the prisoners as "Academia," "Dvorianka," "Yakutka," and "Kharchofka"; 5, *Kámara* used as a prison hospital, or lazaret; 6, Water-closet; 7, Main Corridor; 8, Bath-room; 9, Kitchen; a, Ovens; b, Entry-ways; c, Sentry-boxes; d, Stockade around prison buildings; e, Gate to prison yard; f, Bath-house dressing-room.



Lower Diggings, where they were divided into gangs of twenty-five men each and shut up in four large *kámeras*. Their life, as described in letters surreptitiously written by



INTERIOR OF A KÁMERA IN THE KARÁ POLITICAL PRISON.

some of them to their friends, was hard and hopeless, but not absolutely intolerable. They were allowed to exercise every day in the courtyard, they were permitted to receive small sums of money from their friends, they had in the prison a fairly good library consisting of books purchased



by them or sent to them from European Russia, and they could amuse themselves occasionally by working with carpenter's or blacksmith's tools in a small shop situated in one corner of the courtyard. On the other hand, they were living under very bad sanitary conditions; some of them were kept night and day in handcuffs and leg-fetters; two or three of them were chained to wheelbarrows; those who still had possession of their mental faculties were forced to listen constantly to the babbling or the raving of their insane comrades; they were no longer allowed to diversify their monotonous existence by work in the gold placers; they were deprived of the privilege of enrolment in the free command at the expiration of their terms of probation; they were forbidden to communicate with their relatives; and their whole world was bounded by the high serrated wall of the prison stockade. That their life was a terribly hard one seems to have been admitted, even by the most indifferent of Siberian officials. In March, 1882, Governor-general Anúchin made a report to the Tsar with regard to the state of affairs in Eastern Siberia, in the course of which he referred to the political convicts at Kará as follows:

In concluding this part of my report [upon the prisons and the exile system], I must offer, for the consideration of your Imperial Majesty, a few words concerning the state criminals now living in Eastern Siberia. On the 1st of January, 1882, they numbered in all 430 persons, as follows:

<i>a.</i> Sent to Siberia by decree of a court and now	
1. In penal servitude . . . . .	123
2. In forced colonization . . . . .	49
3. In assigned residences [ <i>na zhityó</i> ] . . . . .	41
<i>b.</i> Sent to Siberia by administrative process and now	
1. In assigned residences [ <i>na zhítelstro</i> ] . . . . .	217
Total . . . . .	430 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is a noteworthy fact, frankly admitted by the governor-general, that out of 430 political offenders banished to Eastern Siberia, 217 — or more than half — had been sent there without trial, and without even a pretense of judicial investigation. I submit this officially stated fact for the attentive consideration of the advocates of a Russo-American extradition treaty.

All of the state criminals belonging to the penal-servitude class are held at the Kará gold mines under guard of a foot company of the Trans-Baikál Cossacks consisting of two hundred men. The sending of these criminals to work with the common convicts in the gold placers is impossible.<sup>1</sup> To employ them in such work in isolation from the others is very difficult, on account of the lack of suitable working-places, their unfitness for hard physical labor, and the want of an adequate convoy. If to these considerations be added the fact that unproductive hard labor, such as that employed in other countries merely to subject the prisoner to severe physical exertion, is not practised with us, it will become apparent that we have no hard labor for this class of criminals to perform; and the local authorities who are in charge of them, and who are held to strict accountability for escapes, are compelled, by force of circumstances, to limit themselves to keeping such state criminals in prison under strict guard, employing them, occasionally, in work within the prison court, or not far from it. Such labor has not the character of penal servitude, but may rather be regarded as hygienic. Immunity from hard labor, however, does not render the lot of state criminals an easy one. On the contrary, complete isolation and constant confinement to their own limited circle make their life unbearable. . . . There have been a number of suicides among them, and within a few days one of them, Pózen, has gone insane. A number of others are in a mental condition very near to insanity. In accordance with an understanding that I have with the Ministry of the Interior, all sufferers from mental disorder will be removed, if possible, to hired quarters in the town of Chíta,<sup>2</sup> since there are in Siberia no regular

<sup>1</sup> The governor-general does not say why this was "impossible," nor does he try to explain the fact that although the politicals were constantly sent to the gold placers under Colonel Kononóvich's management, no evil results followed, and not a single attempt was made to escape.

<sup>2</sup> Up to the time of our visit to the mines, three years and a half later, this promised removal had not been made. Insane politicals were still living in the same *kámeras* with their sane comrades, and intensifying, by their presence, the misery of the latter's existence. In East-Siberian prisons gen-

erally we found little attention paid to the seclusion or care of demented convicts. In more than one place in the Trans-Baikál we were startled, as we entered a crowded prison *kámara*, by some uncared-for lunatic, who sprang suddenly towards us with a wild cry or with a burst of hysterical laughter. The reasons for this state of affairs are given, in part, by the governor-general. There is not an insane asylum in the whole country, and it is easier and cheaper to make the prison comrades of a lunatic take care of him than to keep him in seclusion and provide him with an attendant. For educated

asylums for the insane, and all the existing institutions of that kind in European Russia are full.<sup>1</sup>

It is a fact worthy, perhaps, of remark that the life of the political convicts at Kará, which Governor-general Anúchin describes as "unbearable," was made unbearable by the direct and deliberate action of the Government itself. Anúchin caused to be erected in front of the prison windows the high stockade that hid from the prisoners the whole outside world and turned their place of confinement into a huge coverless box; while the Minister of the Interior, apparently without the least provocation, abolished the free command, and ordered the "complete isolation" which resulted in the suicide and insanity that the governor-general seems to deplore. The condition of the state criminals was not "unbearable" under the administration of Colonel Kononóvich. It became unbearable as a consequence of the orders that forced the latter's resignation.

It was hardly to be expected that young and energetic men would quietly submit to a state of things that was officially recognized as "unbearable," and that was gradually driving the weaker among them to suicide or insanity. In April, 1882, less than a year after Colonel Kononóvich's resignation, and less than a month after the delivery of Governor-general Anúchin's report to the Tsar, a few of the boldest and bravest of the state criminals at Kará made an attempt to escape by digging a tunnel under the prison wall. The excavation, which was made under the floor in one of the *kámeras*, was not discovered; but owing to the marshy nature of the ground upon which the building stood, the hole quickly filled with water, and work in it was abandoned. It then occurred to some of the prisoners that they might

political prisoners, who dread insanity more than anything else, it is, of course, terribly depressing to have constantly before them, in the form of a wrecked intelligence, an illustration of the possible end of their own existence.

<sup>1</sup> Report of Governor-general Anúchin to Alexander III., Chapter V., Section 3, under the heading of "Exile Penal Servitude and the Prison Department." (See Appendix H.)

escape by concealing themselves during the day in the small shop in one corner of the courtyard where they were allowed to work, and then scaling the stockade from its roof at night. The most serious difficulty in the way was the evening "verification." After supper every night the prisoners in all the cells were counted, and the men concealed in the workshop would be missed before it grew dark enough to render the sealing of the stockade reasonably safe. This difficulty the prisoners hoped to overcome by making dummies to take the places of the missing men in the *kámeras*. It was not customary to waken prisoners who happened to be asleep at the time of the evening verification. The officer on duty merely included them in the count without disturbing them, and as he did not enter the dimly lighted cell, but made his count from the door, he was not likely to notice the difference between the figure of a dummy and the figure of a real man lying asleep on the platform with his face to the wall. If the proposed stratagem should succeed, the men who escaped were to make their way down the valley of the Amúr River to the Pacific Ocean, and there endeavor to get on board of some American whaling or trading vessel. In the mean time their comrades in the prison were to supply their places with dummies at every verification, in order to conceal their escape as long as possible, and give them time enough to reach the coast before the inevitable hue and cry should be raised. Late one afternoon in April, when all necessary preparations had been made, two political convicts named Muíshkin and Khrúshechef concealed themselves in a large box in the prison workshop, and just before the time for the evening verification their places were taken by two skilfully constructed dummies in convict dress which were laid on the sleeping-platform in the cell that they had occupied. The substitution was not noticed by the officer who made the evening count, and at a late hour of the night Muíshkin and Khrúshechef crept out of the box in the workshop, climbed up on the roof, sealed



the stockade without attracting the attention of the sentry, and stole away into the forest. A few days later two more men escaped in the same way, and at the end of two weeks the prison authorities were counting every night and morning no less than six dummies, while the six prisoners represented by these lay figures were far on their way towards the coast of the Pacific. Sometime in the course of the third week after the departure of Muíshkin and Khrúshef two more dummies were laid on the sleeping-platforms in the prison *kámeras*, and a fourth couple escaped. In getting away from the stockade, however, one of them unfortunately fell into a ditch or a pool of water, and the splash attracted the attention of the nearest sentry, who promptly fired his rifle and raised an alarm. In ten minutes the whole prison was in commotion. A careful count was made of the prisoners in all the *kámeras*, and it was found that eight men were missing. A few days before this time a visit of inspection had been made to the prison by Mr. Gálkine Wráskoy, chief of the Russian prison administration, and General Ilyashévich, governor of the Trans-Baikál, and when the escape was discovered these high officials were on their way from Kará to Chíta. In response to a summons from Major Pótulof they hurried back to the Lower Diggings and personally superintended the organization of a thorough and widely extended search for the missing men. Telegrams were dispatched to all the seaport towns along the coast of the Pacific, as well as to all points on the Amúr that could be reached by telegraph; descriptions and photographs of the fugitives were mailed to police officials throughout Eastern Siberia; orders were issued to arrest all suspicious or unknown persons; and searching parties of natives, stimulated by the promise of reward, scoured the forests in all parts of the Trans-Baikál. It was impossible, of course, for men who were unfamiliar with the country, who had neither guides, maps, nor compasses, and who were enfeebled by long imprisonment, to elude, for any

great length of time, so persistent and far-reaching a pursuit. Although two of them, Muíshkin and Khrúshef, made a journey of more than a thousand miles, and actually reached the seaport town of Vládivostók, every one of the fugitives was ultimately recaptured and brought back to Kará in handcuffs and leg-fetters.<sup>1</sup>

In the mean time the prison authorities at Kará were making preparations to "give the political convicts a lesson"<sup>2</sup> and "reduce the prison to order." This they purposed to do by depriving the prisoners of all the privileges that they had previously enjoyed; by taking away from them books, money, underclothing, bedclothing, and every other thing not furnished by the Government to common criminals of the penal-servitude class; by distributing them in small parties among the common-convict prisons at Ust Kará, Middle Kará, and Upper Kará; and by subjecting them to what are known to Russian prisoners as "dungeon conditions" (*kártsernoi položénie*).<sup>3</sup> Anticipating, or pretending to anticipate, insubordination or resistance to these measures on the part of the politicals, Ilyashévich and Gálkine Wrásskoy concentrated at the Lower Diggings six *sónias* of Cossacks, and after ten days of inaction, intended, apparently, to throw the prisoners off their guard, ordered a sudden descent upon the prison in the night. This unprovoked attack of an armed force upon sleeping and defense-

<sup>1</sup> The politicals who took part in this unsuccessful attempt to escape were Muíshkin, Khrúshef, Bólomez, Levchéno, Yurkófski, Dikófski, Kryzhanófski, and Minakóf.

<sup>2</sup> This was the expression used by Major Pótulof in speaking to me of the events that followed the escape. It is believed by many of the politicals at Kará that the prison authorities deliberately intended to provoke them to violence, in order, first, to have an excuse for administering corporal punishment, and, secondly, artificially to create a "bunt," or prison insurrection, that would divert the attention of

the Minister of the Interior from their (the officials') negligence in allowing eight dangerous criminals to escape.

<sup>3</sup> A prisoner living under "dungeon conditions" is deprived of money, books, writing-materials, underclothing, bedclothing, tobacco, and all other luxuries; he is not allowed to walk for exercise in the courtyard nor to have any communication with the outside world; and he must live exclusively upon black rye-bread and water, with now and then a little of the soup, or broth thickened with barley, which is known to the political convicts as *balánde*.

less prisoners is known in the history of the Kará political prison as "the *pogróm* of May 11."<sup>1</sup> Three or four hundred Cossacks with bayoneted rifles marched noiselessly into the courtyard under direction of Lieutenant-colonel Rúdenko, filled the prison corridor, and then, throwing open suddenly and simultaneously the doors of all the *kámeras*, rushed in upon the bewildered politicals, dragged them from their sleeping-platforms, and proceeded with great roughness and brutality to search them, deprive them of their personal property, strip them of their clothing, and hale them out into the courtyard. All the remonstrances and protests of the sufferers were answered with insults; and when some of the more impetuous of them, indignant at the unprovoked brutality of the assault, armed themselves with boards torn up from the sleeping-platforms and made an attempt to defend themselves, they were knocked down and mercilessly beaten by the Cossacks with the butt-ends of their guns. Among the prisoners most cruelly maltreated were Voloshénko, Rodiónof, Kobylíanski, Bobókhof, and Orlóf. It is not necessary to go minutely into the details of this scene of cruelty and violence. I do not wish to make it out any worse than it really was, and for my purpose it is sufficient to say that before noon on the 11th of May, 1882, the bruised and bleeding political convicts, robbed of all their personal possessions and stripped of the boots and underclothing that they had bought with their own money and that they had previously been permitted to wear, set out in three parties, on foot and without breakfast, for the common-criminal prisons of Ust, Middle, and Upper Kará. They were guarded by convoys of from fifty to one hundred Cossacks, who had express instructions from Governor Ilyashévich not to spare the butt-ends of their guns. The party destined for Ust Kará, in which there was one man chained

<sup>1</sup> The word *pogróm* has no precise equivalent in the English language. It means a sudden, violent, and destructive attack, like one of the raids made upon the Jews by infuriated peasants in Russian towns some years ago.

to a wheelbarrow, asked permission to stop and rest on the road, as they had had nothing to eat or drink that day and were marching a distance of fifteen *versts* (about ten miles). The soldiers of the convoy, however, refused to allow them to stop, and pricked them on with their bayonets. Thereupon the prisoners who were not handcuffed attacked the Cossacks with stones. An unequal contest followed, in the course of which the men who resisted were knocked down and beaten again with the butt-ends of guns, and all who were not already manacled had their hands tied securely behind their backs. Late in the afternoon, bruised, tired, hungry, and thirsty, they reached Ust Kará, and after being again carefully searched were shut up by twos in the dark and dirty "secret" cells<sup>1</sup> of the common-criminal prison, where they threw their weary bodies down on the cold, damp floors and congratulated themselves that the day was over. The parties sent respectively to the Amúrski prison

<sup>1</sup> "Secret" cells in Siberian prisons are those intended for the solitary confinement of persons accused of murder or other capital crimes. They were not generally shown us in our visits to prisons, but I was permitted by Colonel Makófski to inspect the "secret" cells in the prison at Irkútsk. These had neither beds nor sleeping-platforms, and contained no furniture of any kind except a *paráša*, or excrement bucket. The prisoners confined in them were forced to sleep without pillows or bed-clothing on the cold cement or stone floor, and during the day had either to sit on this floor or to stand. I saw men who had not yet been tried occupying such cells as these in the Irkútsk prison. If I had power to summon as witnesses the subordinate officials of the House of Preliminary Detention in St. Petersburg, I could prove, in a Russian court, that even in that show-prison of the Empire there were *kártzers*, or disciplinary cells, where there was not so much as a *paráša*, and where the floors were covered with excrement. Of

course Mr. Gálkine Wrásskoy and Mr. Kokóftsef, the heads of the Russian prison administration, were not aware of this fact; but, nevertheless, it is a fact, unless both political prisoners and the prison officials themselves severally and independently lied to me. The political offender Dícheskúlo was put into such a cell as this after the riot in the House of Preliminary Detention that followed the flogging of Bogoliúbof. I did not see the "secret" cells in the Kará prisons, but there is no reason to suppose that they were in any better condition than the *kámeras* that I did see and that I have described. I do not mean to have the reader draw the sweeping and mistaken conclusion that all cells, or even all "secret" cells, in Russian prisons are of this kind, nor that the higher prison officials are in all cases responsible for such a state of affairs. All that I aim to do is to make plain the conditions under which educated and delicately nurtured political offenders in Russian prisons are sometimes compelled to live.



and the prison in Middle Kará had an experience similar to that of the Ust Kará party, except that they were not beaten by their guards. Before dark the hundred or more state criminals who had occupied the *kámeras* of the political prison were distributed in small parties among the common-criminal prisons of Ust Kará, the Lower Diggings, Middle Kará, and Upper Kará; the long-term [*bez sróchni*] convicts were in both handcuffs and leg-fetters, and all were living under "dungeon conditions." In this manner Governor Ilyashévich and Mr. Gálkine Wrásskoy put down the "insurrection" that a hundred or more sleeping prisoners presumably would have raised when they awoke, taught the "insurgents" a valuable and much-needed "lesson," and showed the Minister of the Interior how vigorously and successfully his subordinates could deal with a sudden and threatening emergency—and with sleeping men! The political prison had been "reduced to order," but it was the "order" that once "reigned in Warsaw."

For two months the political convicts lived under "dungeon conditions" in the cells of the common-criminal prisons, seeing little of one another and knowing nothing of what was happening in the outside world. Bad air, bad and insufficient food, and the complete lack of exercise soon began injuriously to affect their health; scurvy broke out among them, and in less than a month several, including Tíkhonof and Zhukófski, were at the point of death,<sup>1</sup> and many more were so weak that they could not rise to their feet when ordered to stand up for verification. During all of this time the prison authorities had in their possession money belonging to these wretched convicts; but they would not allow the latter to use it, nor to direct its expenditure for the underclothing, bedding, and nourishing food of which the sick especially were in such urgent need. It was not until scurvy threatened to become epidemic that Major Khaltúrin, a cruel gendarme officer from

<sup>1</sup> Tíkhonof died shortly afterwards.

Irkútsk who had succeeded Major Pótulof in the command of the political prison, consented to allow the prisoners to have bedding.

In the women's prison at Ust Kará the state of affairs was little better. The women, of course, had had nothing whatever to do with the escape, nor with the artificially created "insurrection," but they had, nevertheless, to take their share of the consequences. The new commandant, Major Khaltúrin, believed in strict discipline with no favors; and he regarded the permission that had tacitly been given the women to wear their own dress instead of the prison costume as an unnecessary concession to a foolish and sentimental weakness. He therefore ordered that their own clothing be taken away from them, and that they be required to put on the convict garb. Some of the women were sick and unable to change their dress, others did not believe that the order would really be enforced, and they refused to obey it, and finally the overseer of the prison resorted to violence. The scene that ensued produced such an effect upon Madam Léschern that she attempted to commit suicide.

Outside the political prison at the Lower Diggings were living a number of women who had voluntarily come to the mines in order to be near their husbands. Previous to the escape and the *pogróm* these women had been allowed to have interviews with their imprisoned husbands once or twice a week, and had received from the latter small sums of money, with the help of which they contrived to exist. After the prison had been "reduced to order" and the political convicts had been subjected to "dungeon conditions," interviews between husbands and wives were no longer permitted; and as the prisoners' money was all held in the possession of the authorities, the unfortunate women and children were soon reduced almost to starvation. Véra Rogatchóf, wife of Lieutenant Dmítri Rogatchóf, a young artillery officer then in penal servitude, was brought to

such a state of destitution and despair that she finally shot herself.

On the 6th of July, 1882, eight of the political convicts, who were regarded by the Government for some reason as particularly dangerous, were sent back in chains from Kará to St. Petersburg to be immured for life in the "stone bags" of the castle of Schlussemburg.<sup>1</sup> A few days later—about the middle of July—all the rest of the state criminals were brought back to the political prison at the Lower Diggings, where they were put into new and much smaller cells that had been made by erecting partitions in the original *kámeras* in such a manner as to divide each of them into thirds. The effect of this change was to crowd every group of seven or eight men into a cell that was so nearly filled by the sleeping-platform as to leave no room for locomotion. Two men could not stand side by side in the narrow space between the edge of the platform and the wall, and the occupants of the cell were therefore compelled to sit or lie all day on the plank *nári* without occupation for either minds or bodies. To add to their misery, *paráshas* were set in their small cells, and the air at times became so offensive and polluted that, to use the expression of one of them in a letter to me, "it was simply maddening." No other reply was made to their petitions and remonstrances than a threat from Khaltúrin that if they did not keep quiet they would be flogged. With a view to intimidating them Khaltúrin even sent a surgeon to make a physical examination of one political, for the avowed purpose of ascertaining whether his state of health was such that he could be flogged without endangering his life. This was the last straw. The wretched state criminals, deprived of exercise, living under

<sup>1</sup> These "dangerous" prisoners were Messrs. Gélis, Voloshénko, Butsínski, Paul Orlóf, Malávski, Popóf, Shchedrín, and Kobylíanski. Nothing is known with regard to their fate. Madame Gélis, the wife of one of them, whose acquaintance I made in the

Trans-Baikál, told me that she was denied a last interview with her husband when he was taken away from Kará, that she never afterwards heard from him, and that she did not know whether he was among the living or the dead.

"dungeon conditions," poisoned by air laden with the stench of excrement-buckets, and finally threatened with the whip when they complained, could endure no more. They resolved to make that last desperate protest against cruelty which is known in Russian prisons as a *golodófka*, or "hunger-strike." They sent a notification to Major Khaltúrin that their life had finally become unendurable, that they preferred death to such an existence, and that they should refuse to take food until they either perished or forced the Government to treat them with more humanity. No attention was paid to their notification, but from that moment not a mouthful of the food that was set into their cells was touched. As day after day passed, the stillness of death gradually settled down upon the prison. The starving convicts, too weak and apathetic even to talk to one another, lay in rows, like dead men, upon the plank sleeping-platforms, and the only sounds to be heard in the building were the footsteps of the sentries, and now and then the incoherent mutterings of the insane. On the fifth day of the *golodófka* Major Khaltúrin, convinced that the hunger-strike was serious, came to the prison and asked the convicts to state definitely upon what terms they would discontinue their protest. They replied that the conditions of their life were unbearable, and that they should continue their self-starvation until the excrement-buckets were taken out of their cells, until they were permitted to have books and to exercise daily in the open air, until they were allowed to direct the expenditure of their money for better food and better clothing than were furnished by the Government, and until he [Khaltúrin] gave them a solemn assurance that none of them should be flogged. The commandant told them that the talk about flogging was nonsense; that there had never been any serious intention of resorting to the whip, and that, if they would end their strike, he would see what could be done to improve the material conditions of their life. Not being able to get any positive assurances



that their demands would be complied with, the prisoners continued the *golodófká*. On the tenth day the state of affairs had become alarming. All of the starving men were in the last stages of physical prostration, and some of them seemed to be near their death. Count Dmítří Tolstoï, the Minister of the Interior, who had been apprised of the situation, telegraphed the commandant to keep a *skórbnoi list*, or "hospital sheet," setting forth the symptoms and condition of the strikers, and to inform him promptly of any marked change.<sup>1</sup> Every day thereafter a *feldsher* or hospital-steward went through the cells taking the pulse and the temperature of the starving men. On the thirteenth day of the *golodófká* Major Khaltúrin sent word to the wives of all the political convicts living at the Lower Diggings that they might have an interview with their husbands—the first in more than two months—if they would try to persuade them to begin taking food. They gladly assented, of course, to this condition, and were admitted to the prison. At the same time Khaltúrin went himself to the starving men and assured them, on his honor, that if they would end the hunger-strike he would do everything in his power

<sup>1</sup>I have never been able to understand why a government that is capable when irritated of treating prisoners in this way should hesitate a moment about letting them die, and thus getting rid of them. However, I believe it is a fact that in every case where political hunger-strikers have had courage and nerve enough to starve themselves to the point of death the authorities have manifested anxiety and have ultimately yielded. It is one of many similar inconsistencies in Russian penal administration. The Government seems to be sensitive to some things and brutally insensible to others. It prides itself upon its humanity in expunging the death penalty from its civil code, and yet it inflicts death constantly by sentences of courts-martial in civil cases. It has abolished the *knút*, but it flogs

with the *plet*, which, according to the testimony of Russian officers, can be made to cause death in a hundred blows. It shrinks from allowing political convicts to die of self-starvation and yet it puts them to a slow death in the "stone bags" of the castle of Schlüsselburg. To the practical American intelligence it would seem to be safer, as well as more humane, to order political convicts out into the prison courtyard and have them shot, than to kill them slowly under "dungeon conditions." Society would not be half so much shocked and exasperated by summary executions as it now is by suicides, hunger-strikes, and similar evidences of intolerable misery among the political convicts in prison and at the mines.

to satisfy their demands. The entreaties of the wretched, heart-broken women, and the promises of the commandant finally broke down the resolution of the politicals, and on the thirteenth day the first hunger-strike in the history of the Kará political prison came to an end.

While these events were taking place, a young married woman about twenty-four years of age, named Maria Kutiónskaya, who had been condemned to penal servitude on account of her revolutionary activity in Odéssa, finished her prison term in Kará, and was sent as a forced colonist to a small village called Akshá, situated in the southern part of the Trans-Baikál, on the frontier of Mongolia. She had been an eye-witness of the brutalities that attended the "reduction of the political prison to order" by Rúdenko and Pótulof; she had seen the "lesson" given to the political convicts with the butt-ends of guns; she herself had felt the shame and misery that impelled Madam Léschern and Mrs. Rogatchóf to attempt self-destruction; she was acquainted with the causes and history of the long and desperate hunger-strike that had just ended; and, stirred to the very depths of her soul by a feeling of intense indignation, she determined, as a last resort and at the cost of her own life, to assassinate General Ilyashévich, the governor of the Trans-Baikál, and thus call the attention of the world to the cruelties practised by his authority, and in part under his direction, at the mines of Kará. She was at this time pregnant, and was aware of her condition; she knew that it would be impossible to escape after committing the crime that she contemplated; she knew that she was about to sacrifice her own life, and probably the life also of her unborn child; but so intense were the emotions aroused by all she had seen and known at Kará, that she was ready to commit murder, and to die for it, upon the chance that the deed and its investigation would give publicity to the wrongs and outrages that she and her companions had suffered. As soon as she could get together money enough for her traveling

expenses after her arrival at Akshá, she bought a small, cheap revolver from a common-criminal colonist, ran away from her place of banishment, and, hiring horses from the peasants in the villages through which she passed, made her way towards Chíta, which was the governor's place of residence. As it was not customary for young and attractive women to travel entirely alone in that part of the world, she was regarded with a good deal of interest and curiosity by the peasants, and just before she reached her destination she was arrested by a village official upon suspicion. She persuaded this man to take her to Chíta and turn her over to the *isprávník*, with whom she was personally acquainted. To the *isprávník* she admitted frankly that she had run away from her place of exile, but said that in so doing she had not intended to escape, but merely to get an interview with the governor. After some conversation the *isprávník* went with her to the governor's house, and, leaving her in a reception-room, went to apprise Ilyashévich of her presence and her desire for an interview.

"Have you searched her?" inquired the governor suspiciously.

"No," replied the *isprávník*; "I did n't think of it."

"Never mind," said Ilyashévich. "What can a woman do?" And with these words he entered the reception room where Madam Kutitónskaya, with a cocked revolver hidden under a handkerchief in her right hand, was awaiting him. As he advanced to greet her she raised the revolver, and saying, "This is for the 11th of May,"<sup>1</sup> shot him through the lungs. The wound was not mortal, but he fell to the floor and was carried to a couch by some of the servants, while the *isprávník* seized and disarmed Madam Kutitónskaya, caused her to be bound, and sent her under strong guard to the Chíta prison. Her life there was a life of terrible loneliness and misery. She was put into a cold, dirty, "secret" cell, which the district architect of the Trans-Bai-

<sup>1</sup> The date of the *pogróm* in the Kará political prison.

kál described to me as "hardly long enough to lie down in or high enough to stand up in." Her own dress and under-clothing were taken away from her, and in place of them she was given an old prison suit that had already been worn by a common convict and was full of vermin. She lived under strict "dungeon conditions," and for three months lay without bed-clothing on the bare floor. When, as a result of such hardships and privations, she became sick, and asked for straw to lay down on the planks where she slept, she was told by the chief of police, Mélnikof, that there was no straw for her. But for the food smuggled into her cell and the aid surreptitiously given to her by sympathetic common-criminal convicts in the same prison, she would undoubtedly have died before the meeting of the court appointed to investigate the case. After three months of this wretched existence she was tried by court-martial and sentenced to be hanged. Then, for another whole month, she lay under sentence of death, arguing with herself, through many long, sleepless nights, the question whether or not she should make known to the authorities her pregnant condition, which had not yet become apparent. She knew that an announcement of the fact that she was with child would, in accordance with the custom in such cases, secure a long reprieve if not a commutation of her sentence; but, on the other hand, life held no hope for her, and she believed that if she allowed herself to be hanged under such circumstances, the fact of her pregnancy, which would inevitably be discovered after her death, would intensify the feeling of horror that she hoped would be excited by the series of events which had led up to the catastrophe—would give to such events even greater publicity, and would inspire all lovers of humanity and justice with a deeper and bitterer hatred of the Government. The questions that tormented her most were first, whether, if she allowed herself to be hanged without revealing her condition, she would not be the murderer of her unborn child, and secondly, whether that child



would die when she died, or would live for a time in her dead body. This last ghastly doubt seems to have been particularly harrowing to her in her morbid mental condition, but even in the face of such reflections she finally decided to allow herself to be hanged. Early in January, 1883, the Government, without reference to her condition, of which it was still ignorant, commuted her sentence to penal servitude for life<sup>1</sup> and sent her with a returning party of common-criminal exiles to the city of Irkútsk. Although it was mid-winter, she was not provided with a sheepskin overcoat, nor with felt boots, and she might have perished from cold on the road if the common criminals in the party had not taken pity upon her and furnished her with warm clothing at the expense of their own comfort. When she reached Irkútsk she was in such a condition that she had to be lifted out of her sleigh. As a result of this prolonged agony of mind and body, her child, a short time afterwards, was born dead in the Irkútsk prison. When we left Siberia in 1886 she was still living. All that I know of her life since that time is that it has ended.

When one of my informants first knew Madam Kutitónskaya she was a happy, careless school-girl in Odéssa, and no one would have ventured to predict that in less than ten years she would develop into a woman of such extraordinary energy, courage, self-control, and firmness of purpose. There are few things more remarkable in the records of heroism than the determination of Madam Kutitónskaya to allow herself to be hanged, with a child in her womb, in order that the horror of such an execution might stir the emotions of every man and woman who heard of it, and give wider publicity to the series of events of which it was the final

<sup>1</sup> I was credibly informed, and in justice the fact should be stated, that this commutation of sentence was asked for by Governor Ilyashévich, whose life Madam Kutitónskaya had attempted. Whether he felt, upon reflection, some stirrings of pity and remorse, or whether he merely wished to make a showing of magnanimity in order to throw doubt upon the reports of his cruelty at the mines and break their effect, I do not know.

outcome. Such, however, is the type of character that is forged in the furnace of oppression and tempered in the cold bath of solitary confinement.

The statements that I have made with regard to the events that led to the shooting of Governor Ilyashóvich are based upon conversations with the political convicts who were actors in them, and upon three independently prepared accounts in manuscript of the escape, the *pogróm*, and the hunger-strike. The story of the attempted assassination, and of Madam Kutitónskaya's life in prison is from one of her letters, written after her arrival in Irkútsk. The brief transcript of her intentions, thoughts, and reflections, while lying under sentence of death in Chíta, was obtained from an exiled lady who had many long talks with her in the Irkútsk prison, and whose acquaintance I subsequently made. The whole story, in its main outlines, is known to political exiles throughout Siberia, and I heard it in half a dozen different places. All the efforts that I dared make to get at the Government's side of the case were unsuccessful. The officials to whom I applied for information—with a few exceptions—either manifested such a disinclination to talk that I could not pursue the subject, or else made preposterous attempts to deceive me. A young surgeon in the Irkútsk prison whom I questioned about Madam Kutitónskaya was so frightened that he got rid of me as soon as possible and never dared return my call. The *isprávník* of Nérchinski Zavód, who went to Kará with some of the recaptured fugitives after the escape, described the political convicts to me as *lofki moshéniki* [clever rogues] who were not deserving of either sympathy or respect. Most of them, he said, were "priests' sons, or seminarists who had been expelled from school." Lieutenant-colonel Nóvikof, who was for three years or more commander of the Cossack battalion at the mines of Kará, assured me that the political convicts were mere *malchúshki* [miserable insignificant boys], without any definite aims or convictions; that out of one hundred

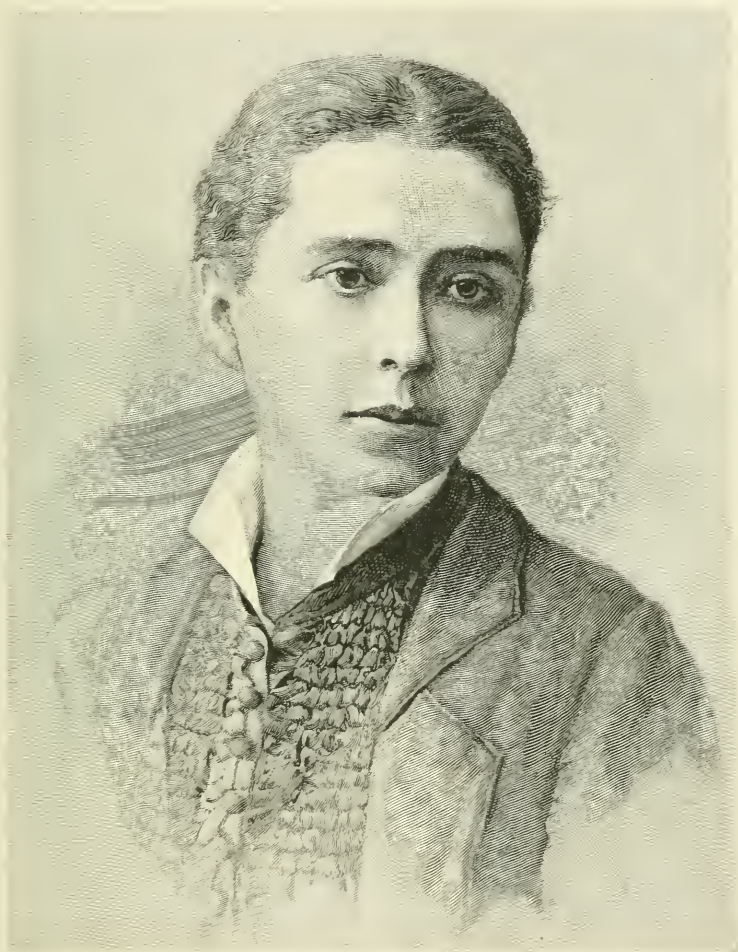
and fifty of them that he had known at Kará only three or four had any education, and that Madam Kutitónskaya's attempt to assassinate Governor Ilyashévich was "a mere crazy freak"—that "she did n't know herself what she did it for." The attentive reader will see that I have had no difficulty in making my choice between such preposterous statements as these and the clear, coherent, and detailed narratives of the political convicts themselves. If my history of the Kará political prison is one-sided, it is simply because the other side either refused to give me information, or was too ignorant to state its own case with any show of plausibility.

How far from the real truth were the statements made to me by officials with regard to the character of the political convicts at Kará, I purpose to show by giving brief biographies of three or four of the men and women who took an active part in the series of events that I have tried to describe, or who were identified with the later history of the political prison. One of the ablest and most distinguished of them was Anna Pávlovna Korbá, whose portrait, made from a photograph taken before her exile, will be found on page 247. She was the daughter of a Russian nobleman named Paul Mengart, and was born in the province of Tver, near Moscow, in 1849. She was carefully educated under the direction of her mother, a cultured and deeply religious woman, and at the early age of eighteen or nineteen she was married to a Swiss gentleman residing in Russia named Victor Korbá. Her beauty and accomplishments made her greatly sought after in society, her husband was wealthy and was proud of her social success, and for a time she lived the life of a woman of the great world. This life, however, could not long satisfy a young girl of bright mind and serious character, and in 1869, when she was only twenty years of age, she made an attempt to fit herself for something better. A school for the higher education of the daughters of the nobility was opened about that time in

connection with a boys' college in St. Petersburg, and Madam Korbá at once enrolled herself as a student, with the intention of finally completing her education in one of the institutions for women at Zurich or in Paris. In 1870 her husband failed in business: she was forced to abandon the hope of finishing her collegiate training abroad, and a short time afterwards went with her husband to reside in the small provincial town of Minsk, where he had obtained employment. Here she began her career of public activity by organizing a society and raising a fund for the purpose of promoting popular education and aiding poor students in the universities. Of this society she was the president. In 1877 the Russo-Turkish war broke out, and opened to her ardent and generous nature a new field of benevolent activity. As soon as wounded Russian soldiers began to come back from Bulgaria, she went into the hospitals of Minsk as a Sister of Mercy, and a short time afterwards put on the uniform of the International Association of the Red Cross, and went to the front and took a position as a Red Cross nurse in a Russian field-hospital beyond the Danube. She was then hardly twenty-seven years of age. What she saw and what she suffered in the course of that terrible Russo-Turkish campaign can be imagined by those who have seen the paintings of the Russian artist Vereshchagin. Her experience had a marked and permanent effect upon her character. She became an enthusiastic lover and admirer of the common Russian peasant, who bears upon his weary shoulders the whole burden of the Russian state, but who is cheated, robbed, and oppressed, even while fighting the battles of his country. She determined to devote the remainder of her life to the education and the emancipation of this oppressed class of the Russian people. At the close of the war she returned to Russia, but was almost immediately prostrated by typhus fever contracted in an overcrowded hospital. After a long and dangerous illness she finally recovered, and began the



task that she had set herself; but she was opposed and thwarted at every step by the police and the bureaucratic officials who were interested in maintaining the existing



ANNA PÁVLOVNA KORBÁ.

state of things, and she gradually became convinced that before much could be done to improve the condition of the common people the Government must be overthrown. She soon afterwards became a revolutionist, joined the party of

"The Will of the People," and participated actively in all the attempts that were made between 1879 and 1882 to overthrow the autoocracy and establish a constitutional form of government. On the 5th of June, 1882, she was arrested and thrown into the fortress of Petropávlovsk, and some months later was tried before the Governing Senate upon the charge of being a terrorist. At the end of the trial she was asked if she had any last words to say in her own defense, and she replied as follows:

"I do not admit my guilt. I will, however, admit that I belong to the revolutionary party,—the party of the Will of the People,—and that I believe in its principles and share its views. As for an organization that chooses and prefers a path of bloodshed, I do not know of any such organization, and I doubt whether any such organization exists. Such a party may arise in time, if the revolutionary movement extends; but if I be living when the time comes, I will not belong to it. If the party of the Will of the People adopts the policy of terror, it is not because it prefers terrorism, but because terrorism is the only possible method of attaining the objects set before it by the historical conditions of Russian life. These are sad and fateful words, and they bear a prophecy of terrible calamity. Gentlemen—Senators, you are well acquainted with the fundamental laws of the Russian Empire. You are aware that no one has a right to advocate any change in the existing imperial form of Government, or even to think of such a thing. Merely to present to the Crown a collective petition is forbidden—and yet the country is growing and developing, the conditions of social life are becoming day by day more and more complicated, and the moment approaches when the Russian people will burst through the barriers from which there is no exit."

The presiding judge, interrupting: "That is your personal opinion."

Madam Korbá, continuing: "The historical task set before the party of the Will of the People is to widen these

barriers and to obtain for Russia independence and freedom. The means for the attainment of these objects depend directly upon the Government. We do not adhere obstinately to terrorism. The hand that is raised to strike will instantly fall if the Government will change the political conditions of life. Our party has patriotic self-control enough not to take revenge for its bleeding wounds; but, unless it prove false to the Russian people, it cannot lay down its arms until it has conquered for that people freedom and well-being. As a proof that the aims of our party are wholly peaceful, I beg you to read the letter written to Alexander III. soon after the 1st of March.<sup>1</sup> You will see from it that we desire only reforms, but reforms that shall be sincere, complete, and vital."

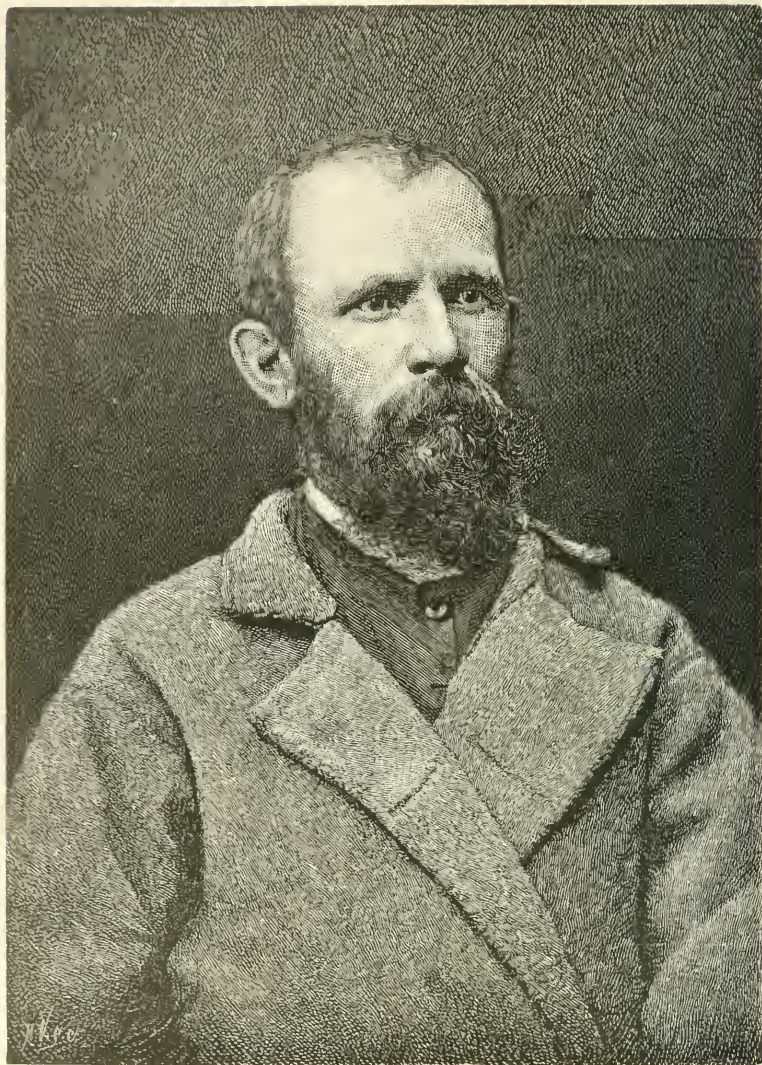
Madam Korbá's last words did not soften towards her the hearts of her judges, and of course she did not expect that they would. She was found guilty, and was sentenced to twenty years of penal servitude with deprivation of all civil rights, and forced colonization in Siberia for life at the expiration of her penal term.<sup>2</sup> At the date of my last advices from the mines of Kará she was still living, but she was greatly broken, and there was little probability that she would long endure the hardships and privations of penal servitude.

Among the male political convicts at the mines of Kará whose careers most interested me was Hypolyte Muíshkin, whose portrait was engraved from a police photograph taken while he was in the fortress of Petropávlovsk. In the year 1864 a well-known author and political economist named Chernishéfski, whose famous novel, "What is to be Done?" has recently been translated into English, was tried in St. Petersburg as a revolutionist and banished to Siberia. He was at first sent to the Alexandrófski central prison,

<sup>1</sup> The date of the assassination of Alexander II. A translation of the letter to which Madam Korbá referred will be found in Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> The official report of the trial of Madam Korbá and others may be found in the St. Petersburg newspaper *Nó-vosti*, No. 9, April 9, 1883.





HYPOLYTE MU'SHIKIN.

(From a police photograph taken in convict dress.)

near Irkútsk, but ultimately he was transferred to the small town of Villúisk, in the sub-arctic province of Yakútsk, where he lived many years under the strictest police sur-



veillance. When, in 1870, the modern revolutionary movement began, it was the dream of all the ardent young Russian revolutionists to rescue Chernishéfski from Siberian exile, and enable him to escape from the Empire to some place where he could continue his work unmolested. Several attempts were made to liberate him, but they all failed, and the project was finally abandoned as impracticable. In 1875 a young student in the Technological Institute at St. Petersburg named Hypolyte Muishkin conceived the idea of going to Siberia in the disguise of a captain of gendarmes and presenting himself boldly to the *isprávník* in Villúisk with forged orders from the gendarmerie directing him [Muishkin] to take charge of the exile Chernishéfski and carry him to Blagovéshchinsk, on the Amúr River. Such transfers of dangerous political exiles were not at that time uncommon, and Muishkin felt confident that he should accomplish his purpose. He went as a private traveler to Irkútsk, resided there several months, succeeded in getting into the corps of gendarmes as a subordinate officer, and in a short time made himself so useful that he was generally trusted and was given the freedom of the office. He provided himself with the necessary blanks, filled them up with an order accrediting him as a gendarme officer intrusted with the duty of taking the exile Chernishéfski to Blagovéshchinsk, forged the signatures, affixed the proper seals, provided himself with the uniform of a captain of gendarmes, and then resigned his position in the gendarmerie upon the pretext that he had received news that made it necessary for him to return at once to European Russia. He disappeared from Irkútsk, and as soon as he deemed it prudent to do so he set out for Villúisk, with the uniform of a gendarme officer in his satchel, and a forged order in his pocket directing the *isprávník* of Villúisk, Captain Zhírkof, to turn over the exile Chernishéfski to him for conveyance to Blagovéshchinsk. Muishkin was an accomplished conspirator, an eloquent talker, and a man of fine personal presence, and

when he presented himself in the uniform of a gendarme officer to the *isprávník* at Villúisk he was received at first with unquestioning deference and respect. He stated his business, and produced the order directing the *isprávník* to turn over the distinguished exile to him for conveyance to Blagovéshchinsk. The plot came very near succeeding, and probably would have succeeded if Muíshkin had had money enough to bring with him two or three confederates in the disguise of soldiers or gendarmes and in the capacity of escort. It is very unusual for a commissioned officer to travel in Siberia without at least one soldier or Cossack to look after his baggage, to see about getting post-horses promptly, and to act generally in the capacity of body-servant. The absence of such a man or men was especially noticeable and unusual in this case, for the reason that Muíshkin was to take charge of an important and dangerous political offender. The absence of an escort was the first thing that excited the *isprávník's* suspicion. It seemed to him very strange that a gendarme officer should be sent there after Chernishéfski without a guard of two or three soldiers to help him to take care of the dangerous prisoner, and the more he thought about it the more suspicious the whole affair appeared to him. After a night's reflection he decided not to turn over Chernishéfski to this gendarme officer without the sanction of the governor of the province, who resided in Yakútsk, and at breakfast the next morning he told Muíshkin that Governor Chernáief was his—the *isprávník's*—immediate superior, and that without an order from the governor he did not feel justified in surrendering an exile of so much importance as the political economist Chernishéfski. He proposed, therefore, to send a courier to Yakútsk with Muíshkin's papers, and to await the return of this courier before taking any action.

"Very well," replied Muíshkin coolly. "I did not suppose that it would be necessary to obtain the consent of the governor before complying with the orders of the imperial

police; but if such consent is indispensable, I will go to Governor Chernáief myself and get it."

When Muíshkin set out for Yakútsk, the *isprávník*, whose suspicions had meanwhile grown stronger, said to him, "It is not proper for an officer of your rank to travel about without any escort, and if you will permit me to do so I will send with you a couple of Cossacks." Muíshkin could not object, and the Cossacks were sent—the *isprávník* instructing them that they were on no account to lose sight of this gendarme officer, because there was something suspicious about him, and it was not certain that he really was what he pretended to be. As soon as Muíshkin had gone, the *isprávník* wrote a letter to the governor, apprising him of his suspicions, and sent it by another Cossack, with directions to get ahead of Muíshkin if possible and deliver it before the latter reached his destination. The Cossack overtook Muíshkin on the road, and in the course of conversation among the soldiers the fact transpired that the third Cossack had a letter from the *isprávník* to the governor. Muíshkin knew then that the game was lost, and at the first favorable opportunity he attempted to escape by dashing suddenly into the woods. The Cossacks, in pursuance of their instructions, endeavored to keep him in sight; but he drew his revolver, fired at them, wounded one of them, and finally made his escape. For nearly a week he wandered around in the great primeval forests that border the river Léna; but at last, half dead from cold, hunger, and exhaustion, he was captured.<sup>1</sup> After some months of imprisonment in Irkútsk he was sent under strong guard to St. Petersburg and was there thrown into the fortress of Petropávlovsk. For nearly three years he lay in a bomb-proof casemate of the Trubetskói bastion awaiting trial, and all that I know of this part of his life I learned from an exile in Siberia who occupied a cell in the fortress near him. This gentleman said that Muíshkin was often delirious from

<sup>1</sup> Indictment in the case of "the 193." Official Copy, pp. 239 and 240.

fever, excitement, or the maddening effect of long solitary confinement, and that he frequently heard his cries when he was put into a strait-jacket or strapped to his bed by the fortress guard.

In October, 1878, Muishkin was finally tried with "the 193" before a special session of the Governing Senate. All of the political prisoners brought to the bar on the occasion of this famous trial insisted that the public should be admitted to hear the proceedings, and that they—the prisoners—should be allowed to have their own stenographer. The Government declined to accede to either of these demands, and, as a consequence, most of the politicals refused to make any defense or to take any part in the proceedings. At the end of the trial Muishkin, when asked if he had any last words to say, made a fiery speech denouncing the secrecy of the trial, and declaring that they did not desire nor expect to escape punishment, but thought they had a right to ask that they be tried in open court and that their case be laid before the people through the press. As soon as Muishkin began to attack the Government he was ordered by the presiding judge to be silent, and when he refused, and insisted upon his right to be heard, the gendarmes were directed to remove him from the court-room. The last words he uttered before he was choked into silence and dragged out were: "This court is worse than a house of ill-fame; there they sell only bodies, but here you prostitute honor, and justice, and law!" For his original offense, aggravated by this outrageous insult to the court, Muishkin was sentenced to ten years of penal servitude with deprivation of all civil rights, and was shortly afterwards incarcerated in the central convict prison at Kharkóf.<sup>1</sup> I have not space for even the briefest description of the sufferings of the political convicts in that prison. The story has been written by one of them and published surreptitiously in

<sup>1</sup> A brief summary of Muishkin's speech and a description of this scene were published in the *New-York Tribune* for March 7 or 8, 1878.



Russia under the significant title, "Last Words over the Coffin of Alexander II." I hope sometime to translate and republish this document, and I need only say now that I have the names of six politicals who went insane in that prison during the short time that it was used as a place of confinement for such offenders. Muishkin was put into a small cell in the lower story that had formerly been occupied by the distinguished political Prince Tsitsiánof. His courage and energy soon led him to meditate plans of escape, and before the end of the first year he had made a dummy to lie in his place on the sleeping-platform, and with only his hands and a small piece of board had dug a tunnel out under the prison wall, disposing of the earth that he removed by packing it into a space between the floor of his cell and the ground. He had also made himself a suit of clothing to put on in place of the prison costume after he should make his escape. Prince Tsitsiánof, who had occupied the cell before him, was a scientist, and during his term of imprisonment had been allowed to have some large maps. These maps had been left as old rubbish on the oven, and Muishkin had soaked the paper off from the muslin on which they were mounted and had made out of the cloth a shirt and a pair of trousers. His preparations for escape were virtually complete, and he was only waiting for a favorable opportunity, when one of the prison officials came to his cell at an unusual hour to speak to him. Muishkin happened to be down in his tunnel, while the dummy was lying in his place on the bed as if he were asleep. The official soon discovered that the lay figure was not the prisoner, an alarm was raised, the mouth of the tunnel was found, and Muishkin was dragged out like a rat from its hole. He was then put into another cell, from which escape was impossible. At the expiration of two or three months, fearing that he was about to become insane, he determined to do something for which he would be shot. He asked and obtained permission to attend

service in the prison church one Sunday, and while there contrived to get near the governor of the prison; and as the latter turned around, after kissing the cross in the hands of the priest, Muíshkin struck him in the face. For this offense he would, under ordinary circumstances, have been shot; but just at that time the attention of the Minister of the Interior was attracted to the Kharkóf central prison by the large number of deaths and cases of insanity among the politicals, and Professor Dobroslávin, a sanitary expert from St. Petersburg, was sent to the prison to make an investigation. He reported that it was not fit for human habitation, said that the cases of death and insanity among the political convicts were not surprising, and recommended that all the prisoners of that class be removed. In the light of this report it was presumed that Muíshkin was insane, or at least in an abnormal mental condition, at the time when he struck the governor of the prison, and he was not even tried for the offense. Shortly afterward he was sent, with all his fellow-prisoners, to the mines of Kará. While they were in the city of Irkútsk on their way to the mines, one of the party, a man named Leo Dmokhófski, died. All the convicts in the party were permitted to attend the funeral in the prison church, and at the conclusion of the brief services Muíshkin felt impelled to say a few words over the body of his comrade. He referred to the high moral character of the dead man and his lovable personality, quoted a verse from the Russian liberal poet Nekrásof, and said, "Out of the ashes of this heroic man, and of other men like him, will grow the tree of liberty for Russia." At this point he was stopped by the chief of police, and at once taken back to his cell. For making what was regarded as a revolutionary speech within the sacred precincts of a church, and in the presence of the "images of the Holy Saints of the Lord," he was condemned to fifteen years more of penal servitude. In talking to me about Muíshkin, some of his comrades described him as

“a born orator who never made but two speeches in his life; one of them cost him ten years of penal servitude, and the other fifteen.” Muíshkin himself said, after reaching the mines of Kará, that there was only one thing in his life which he regretted, and that was his speech over the dead body of his comrade Dmokhófski in Irkútsk. The world could not hear it, it did no good, it was merely the gratification of a personal impulse, and it added so many years to his term of penal servitude that, even if he should live out that term, he would be too old, when finally released, to work any more for the cause of Russian freedom.



MADAM BOGOMÓLETS.

(From a police photograph taken in convict dress.)

Muíshkin was one of the first of the eight prisoners who escaped from the Kará political prison in April, 1882, and he was recaptured, as I have said, in the seaport town of Vládíivostók, to which American vessels come every summer. In 1883 he was sent back to St. Petersburg, with a party of other “dangerous” politicals, and incarcerated in the castle of Schlusselburg. In the autumn of 1885, fearing that, as a result of long solitary confinement, he was about to go insane, he struck one of the castle officers, with the hope that he would be put to death. The experiment that had failed in the Kharkóf

central prison succeeded in Schlusselburg. He was promptly tried by court-martial and shot.

In January, 1882, about three months before the escape of the eight convicts from the political prison at Kará, two married women, Madam Kaválskaya and Madam Bogomó-



N. SICHEDRÍN.

(From a police photograph taken in convict dress.)

lets, escaped from prison while passing through Irkútsk on their way to the mines. They were recaptured before they could get out of the city, and when they were brought back to their cells they were subjected to the customary personal search. These searches are always made by men, even when the prisoners are women, but in most cases they are conducted with decency and with the forms of respect. On

this occasion, however, Colonel Solivióf, an adjutant of the governor-general, and a man of disreputable personal character, who happened to be in the prison when Madam Kaválskaya and Madam Bogomólets were brought back, conducted the search himself, and in the course of it not only insulted the women, but caused them to be stripped naked in his presence. He then had the audacity to go to a *kámara* in which were confined a number of male political convicts and boast of his exploit, remarking contemptuously, "Your political women are not much to look at." Among



the convicts in the cell was a school-teacher named Shchedrín who, exasperated beyond endurance by the recital and the insulting taunt, sprung towards Solivióf, and, calling him a "despicable coward and liar," struck him in the face. For this insult to an officer, and for an attempt that he had made to escape, Shchedrín, upon his arrival at Kará, was chained to a wheelbarrow. In July, 1882, he, with the other "dangerous" political convicts named on page 237, was sent to St. Petersburg to be incarcerated in the castle of Schlüsselburg. He was not released from the wheelbarrow, even when put into a vehicle; but as the roads were rough, and as he was constantly being bruised by the jolting of the barrow against him, it was finally found necessary to unchain him and lash the wheelbarrow on behind. Colonel Vinokúrof, inspector of exile transportation for Western Siberia, told me that he saw Shchedrín, with the wheelbarrow still lashed to his vehicle, passing through the province of Tobólsk.

After the hunger-strike in the Kará political prison in the summer of 1882 the life of the prisoners became a little more tolerable. They were again allowed to have books, money, and some warm clothing of their own, and they were permitted to walk two hours a day in the courtyard. The sanitary conditions of their life, however, continued to be very bad, little attention was paid to the sick, and the death-rate was abnormally high.<sup>1</sup>

Between the resignation of Colonel Kononóvich in 1881 and the appointment of Captain Nikólin in 1885 there were

<sup>1</sup> I have not been able to obtain a complete list of the prisoners who died, committed suicide, or went insane in the Kará political prison between 1879 and 1886, but I know of the following cases:

*Deaths* (all except one from prison consumption): Ishútínof, Krivoshéin, Zhúkof, Pópéko, Madam Lisófskaya, Tíkhonof, Rogatehóf, Dr. Véimar, Miss

Armfeldt, and Madam Kutitónskaya. *Suicides*: Semyónofski (shot himself), Ródlín (poisoned himself), Uspénski (hanged himself). *Insane*: Matvéivich, Zubkófski, Pózen, and Madam Kavaléfskaya (the last named recovered). At the time of our visit to the mines eight out of the eleven women in the women's political prison were sick.

seven changes of commandment<sup>1</sup> and the prison was managed in a hit-or-miss sort of way, according to the caprice of the man who was at the head of it. At one time the prisoners were allowed books, daily walks, money, and communication with their relatives, while at another time all these privileges were taken away from them. The partitions that were erected in the *kámeras* to reduce the size of the cells in 1882 were removed in 1884. The free command, which was abolished in 1881, was reëstablished in 1885. With every new officer there was a change in the regulations, and official whim or impulse took the place that should be occupied only by law. The best of the commandants, according to the testimony of the prisoners, was Burléi. Khaltúrin was brutally cruel, Shúbin was a man of little character, and Manáief was not only a drunkard, but a thief who destroyed hundreds of the prisoners' letters and embezzled 1900 *rúbles* of money sent to them by their relatives and friends in European Russia.<sup>2</sup> All of these officers were from the gendarmerie in Irkútsk. On the 16th of January, 1884, the political prison was put under the exclusive control of the imperial police, and early in 1885 Captain Nikólin was sent from St. Petersburg to take command of it.

Every word that Colonel Kononóvich said to Assistant Minister of the Interior Dúrnovo in 1881 with regard to the management of the political prison was shown by the subsequent course of events to be true. The Government forced an honest and humane man to resign, and sent, one after another, half a dozen cruel or incapable men to take his place, and it reaped, in tragedies and scandals, the harvest that might have been expected.

After we left Kará the state of affairs went from bad to

<sup>1</sup> Kononóvich, Pótulof, Khaltúrin, and nobility, and banished as a criminal to the territory of Yakútsk. Burléi, Shúbin, Manáief, Burléi (a second time), and Nikólin. (Newspapers *Sibir*, April 4, 1885, p. 8,

<sup>2</sup> In January, 1887, three years later, Manáief was deprived of rank, orders, and *Vostóchnoe Obozrénie*, Jan. 8, 1887, p. 4.)

worse. In March, 1888, Mr. Gálkine Wrásskoy, chief of the Russian prison administration, issued the following order with regard to the treatment of political convicts of the hard-labor class.

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR,

CHIEF PRISON ADMINISTRATION. No. 2926.

ST. PETERSBURG, March 1, 1888.

TO THE GOVERNOR OF THE ISLAND OF SAGHALÍN.

*Your High Excellency:* On the steamer Nízhni Nóvgorod of the volunteer fleet, which is to sail from the port of Odéssa on the 20th of March, 1888, there is a party of 525 convicts banished to the island of Saghalín. Among these criminals condemned to penal servitude are the political offenders Vassilli Volnóf, Sergéi Kúzin, Iván Meísner, and Stánislaus Khrenófski. In notifying you of this fact the Chief Prison Administration has the honor respectfully to request that you make arrangements to confine these political offenders, not in a separate group by themselves, but in the cells of other [common criminal] convicts. In making such arrangements it is desirable not to put more than two politicals into any one cell containing common criminals. In making the arrangements for confining these politicals in prison and employing them in work, no distinction whatever must be made between them and other criminals, except in the matter of surveillance, which must be of the strictest possible character. Neither must any difference be made between them and other convicts in respect to punishments inflicted for violations of prison discipline. You will not fail to inform the Chief Prison Administration of the manner in which the above political offenders are distributed on the island of Saghalín, and to forward reports with regard to their behavior.

[Signed] M. GÁLKINE WRÁSSKOY,

Director of the Chief Prison Administration.

Up to the time when the above order was issued some difference had been made in Siberian convict prisons between the treatment of political offenders and the treatment of burglars, highway robbers, and murderers. Both classes were confined in the same prisons, received the same food, and wore the same dress and leg-fetters, but the politicals were isolated in cells specially set apart for them, and were

virtually exempt from corporal punishment. They did not enjoy this exemption, however, by virtue of any law. Theoretically and legally they were liable to the same punishments that were inflicted upon common criminals—namely, twenty to one hundred blows with the “rods” or the *plet* [a heavy whip of hardened rawhide with a number of lashes]. In practice, however, it was the custom for the prison surgeon to make a *pro formâ* examination of the political offender who had rendered himself or herself liable to corporal punishment, and certify to the governor of the prison that, in his judgment, such offender was not strong enough to take a flogging without danger to life. Whether, as a matter of fact, this certificate was true or false, the governor always made it his warrant for substituting some other form of punishment. The Government did not venture at that time to use the whip upon the backs of educated and refined men and women, and the surgeon’s certificate was a mere legal fiction, intended to relieve the prison administration from the necessity of actually enforcing its right to flog political convicts and, at the same time, to hold that right in abeyance. The issuance in March, 1888, of the order above set forth marked a new departure in the treatment of political convicts, and since that time they have been put into the same cells with thieves, burglars, and murderers, and have been flogged precisely as if they were common criminals. On the 16th of September, 1888, a little more than six months after the above order appeared, two of the very political offenders named in it—Vassilli Volnóf and Iván Meisner—were flogged at the penal establishment on the island of Saghalín as the result of a collision with the local authorities, caused by the failure of one of them to take off his cap to a petty official whom he happened to meet.

At the mines of Kará, however, Mr. Gálkine Wrásskoy’s order had much more tragic consequences than these, inasmuch as it led there to the flogging to death of a cultivated



woman, the suicide of three of her companions, and an attempt at self-destruction on the part of more than twenty men. I have received from political exiles in Siberia four separate and independent accounts of the series of events that led up to this tragic climax, and it would be easy to compile from them a graphic and sensational story of "Siberian horrors." I have no desire, however, to exaggerate or color with imagination the facts of Siberian convict life, and I shall therefore lay aside these exile manuscripts, and offer the reader, instead, a translation of a private letter written to me by a Russian gentleman who lives near the mines of Kará, who is not an exile nor a political offender, who occupies a position that affords him every opportunity to know the truth, and who not only writes coolly and dispassionately, but confines himself to a bare statement of facts. The letter is as follows:

X——, EASTERN SIBERIA, April 11-23, 1890.

MY DEAR MR. KENNAN: The events herein described seem to me so important that although I have already written about them once I am going to repeat what I said for fear that my first letter has not reached you. I give you facts only, and I assure you, upon my honor, that they *are* facts, and facts with regard to which there is *no doubt or question*.

On the 5th of August, 1888, Baron Korf, governor-general of the Amúr,<sup>1</sup> paid a visit to the Kará convict prisons. One of the political prisoners—Elizabeth Kaválskaya<sup>2</sup>—did not rise to her feet when the governor-general entered her cell, and upon his making some remark to her with regard to it she replied that she

<sup>1</sup> In the year 1884 Eastern Siberia was divided into two governor-generalships, one including the provinces of Irkútsk and Yeniséisk and the territory of Yakútsk, the other comprising the maritime territory, the Amúr territory, and the territory of the Trans-Baikál. This administrative rearrangement of the political divisions of the country took the mines of Kará out of the jurisdiction of the Irkútsk governor-general and subjected them to the authority

of the governor-general of the Amúr, whose headquarters were at Khabarófká. [Author's note.]

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Kaválskaya was tried by court-martial at Kiev in May, 1881, and condemned as a revolutionist to penal servitude for life. While in Irkútsk, on her way to the mines of Kará, she made her escape, but was recaptured, stripped naked, and searched as described in this chapter. At the time to which this letter refers she was an

did not think it necessary to get up.<sup>1</sup> About a week later General Khoróshkin, the governor of the Trans-Baikál, ordered that she be taken to the central convict prison at Vérkhni Údinsk.<sup>2</sup> The execution of the order was attended with rough treatment and insult. Lieutenant-colonel Masiúkof, the gendarme officer in command of the political prisons,<sup>3</sup> intrusted the whole matter to a petty officer of the prison administration, named Bobrófski. The latter did not think it necessary to inform Madam Kaválskaya beforehand that she was to be taken away, but suddenly appeared in her cell with a file of soldiers at four o'clock in the morning, and dragged her, half-naked, out of bed. The soldiers tore off from her all of her own underclothes, making meanwhile various insulting remarks, and dressed her forcibly in the clothing provided by the Government for common criminal women.<sup>4</sup> At this she fainted, whereupon they laid her, still unconscious, upon a blanket, carried her down to the bank of the river, and put her into a small boat for transportation to Strétinsk.<sup>5</sup> [The water in the Shílka was so shallow at that time that the steamers were not running.] As a result of all this the women in the women's political prison demanded that the commandant Masiúkof, who had permitted such treatment of Madam Kaválskaya, be removed, and they enforced their demand with a hunger-strike [voluntary self-starvation] that lasted sixteen days. Although the men's political prison was secretly in communication with the prison of the women, the male convicts did

invalid, or semi-invalid, and all of my other informants agree that she had consumption. Her name must be carefully distinguished from that of Madam Kavaléfskaya, which it resembles. Both women were at Kará. [Author's note.]

<sup>1</sup> It is a rule in all Russian prisons that when an officer — and particularly an officer of high rank — enters a cell, every prisoner shall rise to his or her feet and stand in the attitude of attention. Madam Kaválskaya neither rose to her feet nor noticed in any way the governor-general's entrance. [Author's note.]

<sup>2</sup> The new prison described in chapter IV. of this volume. It is distant from Kará about 600 miles. [Author's note.]

<sup>3</sup> Appointed in place of Captain Nikó-

lin since my visit to Kará. [Author's note.]

<sup>4</sup> At the time of our visit to Kará political convicts of both sexes were allowed, as a rule, to wear underclothing purchased by themselves with their own money, and to have their own bedding. Under the order issued by the prison administration on the 1st of March, 1888, they would not be entitled to this privilege, particularly if they were about to be subjected, as Madam Kaválskaya was, to "dungeon conditions." [Author's note.]

<sup>5</sup> The distance from Ust Kará to Strétinsk is about seventy miles up-stream, and Madam Kaválskaya must have spent at least three days in the small rowboat with the soldiers who had already stripped her naked and insulted her. [Author's note.]

not participate in this hunger-strike for the reason that, in their opinion, the action of the commandant Masiúkof was not the result of an evil intention, but rather of a weak character and general stupidity. [It is said that Masiúkof, really, is not a bad man.] Finally, at the expiration of sixteen days, the male political convicts persuaded the women to abandon their hunger-strike, and send memorials to the governor of the Trans-Baikál and the chief of the Irkútsk gendarmerie.<sup>1</sup> All of these memorials embodied a protest, on the part of the signers, against the violent treatment of Madam Kaválskaya, and some of them contained a demand that Masiúkof, as the person chiefly to blame for the trouble, should be removed. In due course of time the memorials were answered. The governor of the Trans-Baikál replied that the right to pass judgment on the acts of officials belonged exclusively to the Government which employed such officials, and that any person who should affront or insult a Government official would be held to legal accountability. The colonel of gendarmes in Irkútsk, who was Masiúkof's direct superior, replied that he expected to come to Kará soon, and that he would then make a personal investigation. Some weeks later this officer — Colonel von Plóttó — did go to Kará, instituted there an inquiry into the



ELIZABETH KAVÁLSKAYA.

(From a police photograph taken in convict dress.)

<sup>1</sup> Political exiles and convicts are forbidden to address to the authorities a collective petition, or to take joint action of any kind with regard to any subject, but this prohibition does not extend to a number of separate individual memorials, provided they are not identical in terms. [Author's note.]

circumstances of the case, and then promised the politicals that, at the expiration of a certain fixed period, Masiúkof should be removed. The specified time elapsed, and Masiúkof still continued to hold his position as commandant of the political prisons. Then began in the women's prison a second hunger-strike, which was supported this time by the convicts in the men's prison, and which lasted twenty-two days. It ended in Masiúkof's promising that within three months he would leave Kará of his own accord. During these three months the women refused to send or receive anything that would have to pass through his hands—that is, they gave up correspondence with their relatives, and declined to take money, books, etc., sent to Masiúkof for them. The three months ended August 31, 1889. [You see the affair had dragged along for a whole year.] Madam Sigída [Hope Sigída] then tried to shame Masiúkof into leaving Kará by striking him in the face.<sup>1</sup> She was at once seized and thrown into the common criminal prison of Ust Kará [that is, separated from her companions]. Immediately after this, on the 1st of September, 1889, began the third hunger-strike in the women's political prison, which was finally broken up by the removal to the common criminal prison of Miss Kalúzhnaya, Miss Smirnítskaya, and Madam Kavaléfskaya. Madam Kavaléfskaya and Madam Sigída continued for a time to starve themselves, but were fed by force. Masiúkof made a report upon this series of occurrences, and, as a result of it, a proclamation was received from the governor of the Trans-Baikál and read to the political convicts, saying that, in view of the disorders at Kará, the governor-general had directed the commandant of the political prisons to resort to various severe disciplinary measures, among them corporal punishment. At the same time the governor or director of the Kará penal establishment<sup>2</sup> received an order from Governor-general Korf directing him to punish Hope Sigída with 100 blows of the "rods" in the presence of the surgeon, but without previous surgical examination.<sup>3</sup> The surgeon of the Kará prison hospital, Dr. Gúrvich, thereupon gave notice officially that, in his opinion, Madam Sigída could not endure so much as

<sup>1</sup> The other accounts that I have received from Siberia differ as to the circumstances in which this blow was given and the reasons for it. The precise facts, probably, will never be known.

<sup>2</sup> The officer who had taken the place

filled at the time of my visit by Major Pótulof. [Author's note.]

<sup>3</sup> This was intended apparently to preclude the possibility of a report on the part of the surgeon that the punishment would endanger life. [Author's note.]



a single blow, and that, furthermore, since he was not legally obliged to witness punishments inflicted by administrative order and without the sentence of a court, he should decline to be present. [It should be noted here that there had been no formal inquiry into the circumstances of Madam Sigída's case and no examination [*slédstvie*.] The governor of the Kará penal establishment, Gomulétski, did not at once execute the order of the governor-general, but reported to his immediate superior the statement and declaration of the prison surgeon. Baron Korf thereupon directed that the previous order be executed without the presence of the surgeon. Gomulétski still put off the punishment, Masiúkof refused to take charge of the affair, and finally Bobrófski—the same officer who had ill-treated Madam Kaválskaya—was brought from Nérehinski Zavód to serve as executioner. [I forgot to mention in its proper place the fact that after the Kaválskaya affair Bobrófski was promoted to be assistant superintendent of the convict prisons in the whole Nérehinsk mining district.]

On the 6th of November, 1889, Bobrófski arrived at Kará, and immediately carried the order of Governor-general Korf into execution.

Many stories are in circulation with regard to the repulsive details of this infernal act of cruelty, but I will not write them to you because I cannot answer for the truthfulness of them. After the execution Madam Sigída, in a state of unconsciousness, was carried back into the prison, and on the 8th or 9th of November she died—I think from poison. On the night of the 10th Marie Kavaléfskaya, Marie Kalúzhnaya, and Nadézhda Smirnítskaya, who also had taken poison, were brought from their cells to the prison hospital, and died there, one after another.<sup>1</sup> A few days later—November 15th—Dr. Gúrvieh was summoned by Masiúkof to the men's political prison to treat twenty more con-

<sup>1</sup> Miss Marie Kalúzhnaya, aged twenty-three, was the daughter of a merchant in Odéssa, and had been condemned to twenty years of penal servitude. Her story may be found in the article entitled "Prison Life of the Russian Revolutionists," in *The Century Magazine* for December, 1887, p. 289. Miss Hope Smirnítskaya, aged thirty-seven, was the daughter of a Russian priest, and at the time of her arrest—

ten or twelve years ago—was a student in one of the high schools for women [*ruíshi zhénski kúrsi*] in St. Petersburg. She had been sentenced to fifteen years of penal servitude. ["Russian State Prisoners," *Century Magazine* for March, 1888, p. 759.] The story and portrait of Madam Kavaléfskaya were given in chapter VII of this volume. [Author's note.]

viets who had poisoned themselves. All were saved except Iván Kalúzhni [brother of the young girl who committed suicide on the 10th], and Sergéi Bobókhof, both of whom died on the morning of November 16th. It is said that, at first, the authorities lost their heads and became demoralized; but the governor of the Trans-Baikál soon took energetic measures to prevent the affair, as far as possible, from becoming known. He went to Kará himself, as did also the territorial procureur and the colonel of gendarmes; but what happened afterward I do not know.

I was unable to write you more promptly with regard to this affair on account of circumstances beyond my control.

With sincere respect, I am yours

N—— N——.

Hope Sigída, the heroine of this terrible prison tragedy, was the daughter of a well-known merchant named Malak-siánof, who lived and was engaged in business in the city of Táganrog in European Russia. She was born there in the year 1864 and was therefore, at the time of her death, about twenty-five years of age. She received a good education, and was graduated from the women's gymnasium in Táganrog with the highest honors and the gold medal for the year. It was her intention to continue her studies in one of the high schools for women in St. Petersburg, but, soon after her graduation, her father failed in business, and she was forced to become a teacher in one of the public schools in order to help to support her family. In 1884 she was married to Mr. A. S. Sigída, an officer of the Táganrog Circuit Court. Both she and her husband were revolutionists, and in 1885 they, with a number of others, established in Táganrog a secret printing-office, devoted to the dissemination of revolutionary ideas. On the 23d of January, 1886, this printing-establishment was discovered and captured by the police, and Madam Sigída, with many others, was arrested and thrown into prison. She was held in solitary confinement from January, 1886, to October, 1887—almost two years—and was then tried, found guilty, and sentenced to a long term of penal servitude at the mines of Kará.

A lady in Russia who knew Madam Sigída well, and who was at one time closely associated with her, has written me the following estimate of her character:

Hope Sigída was a woman naturally endowed with great mental ability and intrepidity. In her appearance and behavior there was nothing whatever to suggest the blue-stocking, or the "Nihilist," and for that reason all who knew her merely in her official capacity as a teacher in the public schools were astonished when she was arrested in the secret printing-office. But, apart from the official side of her character, there was another, never seen by the curious eyes of the uninitiated. She was a conspirator. You know, Mr. Kennan, how innocent, and even praiseworthy, are the objects that a Russian has to attain by means of conspiracy. If you try to help your comrades and friends by bringing them together at intervals for study and discussion, the Government immediately invents a new and previously unheard-of crime called "organizing circles for self-cultivation." If you try to teach poor peasants to read, and to instruct them with regard to their rights and duties as human beings, you are accused by the Government of another "crime" — viz: "having dealings with peasant laborers." Of course, Hope Sigída had every reason to be a conspirator. She was a woman of great independence and self-reliance, she had a rarely developed sense of justice, she was intelligent and cultivated in the highest degree, she was absolutely fearless in the domain of thought, and she was a fanatical idealist. She naturally played a leading part, therefore, both in the gymnasium and in the "circle for self-cultivation," and by all of her associates in those organizations she was greatly beloved. In personal appearance Madam Sigída was very attractive. She was a rather slender brunette of medium height, with an oval face full of expression and energy, and remarkably beautiful eyes. She was always dressed neatly and with taste, but very simply.

In February, 1890, soon after the receipt in Europe of the first news of the Kará tragedy, the St. Petersburg *Nóvoe Vrémya* and the *Journal de St. Petersbourg* [the official organ of the Russian Foreign Office] declared that "the reports of the flogging to death of Madam Sigída and the suicide of three other female prisoners at Kará, in the province of the

Amúr, are unqualified falsehoods.”<sup>1</sup> The denial was doubtless inspired by the chief of the prison administration or the Minister of the Interior, but it was none the less futile and ill-ad-



MADAM SUKHOMLÍNA.

(Went voluntarily to the mines with her husband in 1888.)

vised, because the salient facts of the case were at that time known, and known through official statements and admissions, to at least half the population of Eastern Siberia. Only a month later the chief of the prison administration himself admitted the flogging, but pleaded justification. He declared that “Kennan and others etherealized Nihilist women out of all recognition,” that the political exiles and convicts

“brought troubles upon themselves by being excitable and intractable” and that “an example was necessary.”<sup>2</sup>

In June, 1891, a gentleman living in a European city wrote to the editor of *The Century Magazine*, apparently for publication, a letter upon this subject, in which he gave what seemed to be an officially inspired version of the facts; and, as I have not been able to find any other defense of the action of the East-Siberian

<sup>1</sup> Cable despatch dated London, February 20, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> Cable despatch dated St. Petersburg, March 13, 1890.



officials in this case, I submit the letter for what it may be worth.

X—— HOTEL, X——, June 3, 1891.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CENTURY MAGAZINE:

*Sir*: As your contributor Mr. George Kennan and other persons still circulate stories as to flogging in Russia, and insist that Madam Sigída was flogged to death, I ask space for a few words in reply. More women have been flogged in the United States than in Russia during the last ten years. Indeed, I doubt if there is any instance of flogging a Russian lady except Madam Sigída. Her case was as follows:

In the year 1888 the discipline of the prisoners in Siberia being very bad, an ordinance was adopted rendering them liable to flogging for grave breaches of discipline. Good conduct was, of course, all that was necessary to avoid punishment. The prisoners at Kará, however, came to a resolution that if any of their number was flogged they would all commit suicide. Shortly after this Madam Sigída sent for the governor of the jail, on the pretext of important business, and on his arrival she struck him in the face. There could scarcely be a grosser or more unprovoked breach of discipline, especially as such a blow is considered a greater insult in Russia than elsewhere. [This was more than a year after the ordinance.] That Madam Sigída was a healthy woman at the time is evident from the fact that she had just gone through a "hunger-strike" which lasted either fourteen or seventeen days. No delicate woman could have endured this. But as she was pulled down by long fasting the prison doctor refused to permit her to be flogged until she had recovered her strength. The punishment was accordingly postponed, and she was not flogged until about three weeks after the "hunger-strike" was over. The flogging would not have been considered severe if inflicted by the White Caps or Regulators of America. Three days afterward Madam Sigída, and three female companions who had not been flogged, died, and the male prisoners also took poison, though with less fatal results. It is admitted that the other three women committed suicide. It is admitted that Madam Sigída was one of those who had agreed to commit suicide if any prisoner was flogged, and it is admitted that she died on the same day with the suicides. Yet, in the face of all this, an attempt has been made to persuade the American public that she was flogged to death. It is not

alleged that the prison doctor ascribed her death to the flogging. It is not alleged that any one who saw her after the flogging saw her terribly cut up and fainting from weakness, or giving any other indication of fatal flogging. The only evidence that the flogging, which she actually courted, was unduly severe, is that she died in three days afterward—the day when the other prisoners committed suicide.

Your obedient servant,

C—— M——.

There seems to me to be very little in the quibble that Madam Sigída was not flogged to death because, so far as we know, she did not actually die under the lash. If Mr. C—— M——'s younger sister, a cultivated, generous, impulsive, and patriotic young Irish girl, we will say, had been sent to the Andaman Islands for twenty years as a hard-labor convict because she had helped to maintain a secret "Home Rule" printing-office in Belfast; if, driven to despair by cruel treatment of herself and her companions in penal servitude, she had starved herself twenty-two days in order to bring about, by the only means of compulsion open to her, the removal of the officer responsible for such cruel treatment; if, finally, she had been fed by force through a rubber tube; if, in the abnormal mental condition that would naturally be caused by so terrible an experience of hunger and outrage, she had committed a breach of prison discipline; if she had then been stripped, held by the wrists on a soldier's back, and flogged until she fainted; and if, at last, in an agony of helplessness, shame, and despair, she had taken her own life, I do not think that Mr. C—— M—— would regard it as an overstatement if I should say that his sister had been "flogged to death." But the question is unimportant. It seems to me that, so far as moral responsibility is concerned, Madam Sigída and her three companions were just as truly put to death by the East-Siberian officials as if their throats had been cut in the prison courtyard by the prison executioner. You may so treat a high-spirited woman, if she is wholly in your power, that she will cer-



A RELIGIOUS SERVICE AT AN OROZHÁNNI ENCAMPMENT.

tainly commit suicide if she can; but the mere fact that she dies by her own hand does not relieve you from moral accountability for her death.

Since the tragedy of 1889 communication with the political convicts at Kará has become more difficult, and all that I know of their life is that it has changed again for the worse. The order issued by the prison administration on the 1st of March, 1888, has been carried into execution, and no dis-





PEASANTS THRESHING GRAIN ON THE ICE.

tion is now made between politicals and common criminals. Many of the former—but how many I do not know—have been transferred from Kará to the famous and dreaded mine of Akatúi, in the Nérchinsk district, where



they live and work with ordinary felons of the hard-labor class. This is a return to the method of treating politicals that was practised more than forty years ago, when the gifted Russian novelist Dostoyéfski was sent to Siberia in chains, and worked and was flogged with common criminals in the convict prison of Omsk. Most intelligent Russian officials are now ashamed of *that* episode in the history of their literature and their Government. The time, I hope, is not far distant when they will be even more ashamed of flogging women, chaining school-teachers to wheelbarrows, and subjecting political convicts generally to treatment from which they gladly escape by suicide.

On the 12th of November Mr. Frost and I left the mines of Kará forever, and with glad hearts turned our faces, at last, homeward. As we drove away, with Major Pótulof, from the Lower Diggings, two political convicts, in long gray overcoats, who were walking towards the prison at a distance of one hundred and fifty or two hundred yards from the road, saw and recognized us, and as we passed they stopped, removed their caps, and made towards us what the Russians call a "waist bow"—a bow so low that the body is bent at right angles from the waist. It was their last mute farewell to the travelers who had shown them sympathy and pity, and it is the last remembrance I have of the mines of Kará.

We spent that night in the house of the overseer of the Ust Kará prison, at the mouth of the river, and on the following morning remounted our horses for another ride across the mountains to Strétinsk. Major Pótulof opened a bottle of white Crimean wine after we had climbed into our saddles, and, pouring out a glassful for each of us and for himself, said, "Here 's to the beginning of a journey to America!" We drank the stirrup-cup with bright anticipations of a return to home and friends, thanked Major Pótulof for his kindness and hospitality, promised to apprise him by telegraph of our safe arrival at Strétinsk, and rode away into the mountains.

The country lying along the Shílka, in the vicinity of Kará, is inhabited, away from the river, only by a tribe of



RETURNING FROM KARÁ ON THE ICE OF THE SHÍLKA RIVER.

half-wild nomads, known to the Russians as “Orozhánni.” They acknowledge allegiance to the Russian Government, pay taxes, and are nominally Christians; but they rarely come into the Russian settlements, unless brought there by

a desire to exchange their furs or reindeer for knives, kettles, or tobacco. The Russian priest at Kará visits them from time to time to conduct religious services; and the picture of an Orozhánni encampment during one of these services, on page 273, is from a photograph made and given to me by a political exile in Nérchinsk.

For two days after leaving Kará we rode on horseback across the rugged, forest-clad mountains that skirt the river Shílka, suffering constantly from cold, hunger, and fatigue. On the third day we reached Botí, the village from which we had taken our horses, and found most of the population engaged in threshing out grain with flails on the ice. The peasants manifested great pleasure at seeing us, and said we had been gone so long that they had almost given us up for lost. The excitement and anxiety of our life at Kará, and the hardships of our ride across the mountains in a temperature below zero had so exhausted my strength that when we reached Botí my pulse was running at 120, and I could hardly sit in the saddle. I should not have been able to ride on horseback another day. Fortunately, we found the river at Botí solidly frozen, and were able to continue our journey in sledges on the ice. Late on the night of November 16th, tired, half-starved, and deadly cold, we reached the town of Strétinsk, and found food, shelter, and rest in the little cabin of the young peasant Záblikof, where we had left most of our baggage when we set out on horseback for the mines of Kará.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SILVER MINES OF NÉRCHINSK

MR. FROST and I reached Strétinsk on our return from the mines of Kará in a state of physical exhaustion that made rest an absolute necessity. Excitement, privation, and exposure, without sufficient food, to intense cold had so reduced my strength that I could not walk a hundred yards without fatigue, and the mere exertion of putting on a fur overcoat would quicken my pulse twenty or thirty beats. It did not seem to me prudent, in this weak condition, to undertake a ride of six hundred miles, in springless *telégas*, through the wild and lonely region in which are situated the Nérchinsk silver mines. For three days, therefore, we rested quietly in the log-house of the young peasant Záblikof, on the bank of the Shílka River, eating all the nourishing food we could get, sleeping as much as possible, and bracing ourselves up with quinine and Liebig's extract of beef.

Sunday morning, finding my strength measurably restored, I walked across the ice of the river to the town of Strétinsk and called upon the *zasedátel*, or district inspector of police, for the purpose of obtaining horses. Through the greater part of the Nérchinsk silver-mining district regular post-roads are lacking; but we had received authority by telegraph from the governor of the province to ask the coöperation of the police in hiring horses from the peasants along our route, and I had letters of introduction to most of the police officials from Major Pótulof. The *zasedátel* received me courteously, and at once made the



necessary requisition for horses, but said he must warn me that an epidemic of smallpox prevailed in all the region between Strétinsk and the mines, and that it would be unsafe for us to sleep at night in the peasants' houses, or even to go into them for food. This unwelcome intelligence discouraged us more than anything that we had yet heard. The journey to the mines would involve hardship enough at best, and if, in a temperature that was almost constantly below zero, we could not enter a peasant's house to obtain food or shelter without risk of taking the smallpox, we should be between the horns of a very unpleasant dilemma. I was strongly tempted to proceed westward to the town of Nérchinsk, and enter the mining district from that side; but such a course would greatly increase the distance to be traveled, and finding that Mr. Frost was willing to share with me the risk of infection, I finally decided to adhere to our original plan. Sunday afternoon we loaded our baggage into a small, shallow *teléga*, lashed on behind a bag of frozen bread upon which we could not comfortably sit, and set out, with two horses and a ragged, low-spirited driver, for the Alexandrófski Zavód and the mine of Algachí.

The silver mines of Nérchinsk are not situated, as one might suppose them to be, at or near the town of Nérchinsk, but are scattered over a wild, desolate, mountainous region, thousands of square miles in extent, known as "The Nérchinsk Silver-mining District." This district is coterminous, on its southern side, with the frontier line of Mongolia, and occupies the greater part of the irregular triangle formed by the rivers Shílka and Argún, just above the point where they unite to form the Amúr. The existence of silver and lead ore in this region was known even to the prehistoric aborigines of Siberia, and traces of their primitive mining operations were found near the Argún by the first Russian explorers of the country. In the year 1700 Greek mining engineers in the employ of the Russian Government founded the Nérchinski Zavód, or Nérchinsk Works, near the Mongolian frontier, and before the end of the century shafts

had been sunk in more than twenty places between the Argún and the Shílka, and eight *zavóds*, or smelting-furnaces, had been constructed for the reduction of the ore. The mines were worked at first by peasants brought from other parts of Siberia and forcibly colonized at points where their labor was needed, but in 1722 their places were taken to some extent by hard-labor convicts deported from the prisons of European Russia. Since that time the mines have been manned partly by colonized peasants and partly by common criminals of the penal-servitude class. With the exception of Poles and a few of the Decembrist conspirators of 1825, political convicts have not been sent to the Nérehinsk silver-mining district until within the last two or three years. Thousands of Polish insurgents were transported thither after the unsuccessful insurrection of 1863,<sup>1</sup> but since that time political offenders, as a rule, have been sent to the mines of Kará.

Our first objective point, after leaving Strétinsk, was the Alexandrófski Zavód, or Alexander Works, distant in a southwesterly direction about one hundred and twenty-five miles. The "Works," from which the place originally derived a part of its name and all of its importance, were abandoned many years ago and gradually fell into ruins, but the village attached to them still lingers in a moribund condition and now sustains a small convict prison. As we wished to examine this prison, and as the Alexandrófski Zavód, moreover, was a convenient point of departure for the once famous but subsequently abandoned mine of Akatúi, we decided to make there a short stay. The weather when we left Strétinsk was cold and cloudy, with a raw wind from the northeast. The low, desolate mountains between which we traveled were whitened by a thin film of snow, but the

<sup>1</sup> According to Maxínof, who had access to the official records, the number of Poles exiled to Siberia between the years 1863 and 1866 was 18,623. Of this number 8199—including 4252 nobles—were sent to Eastern Siberia

and 7109 of them were condemned to penal servitude. Nearly all of the last-named class went to the Nérehinsk silver mines. Maxínof, "Siberia and Penal Servitude," Vol. III, pp. 80, 81. St. Petersburg: 1871.

road was bare and dry, and we were soon covered with dust thrown up by the wheels of our vehicle. By the time we had made the first stretch of twenty miles we were cold, tired, and hungry enough to seek rest and refreshment; but the village where we stopped to change horses had a deserted, pestilence-stricken appearance, and we did not even dare to alight from our *teléga*. Cold and hunger were preferable to smallpox. Our driver tried to reassure us by declaring that the disease was of a mild type, but Mr. Frost expressed a fear that it might resemble Siberian vermin in being comparatively "mild" and harmless to natives but death to foreigners. When we reached the village of Kopún, at the end of the second stretch, it was beginning to grow dark, the mercury had fallen nearly to zero, and I was so deadly cold that I could hardly move my stiffened and benumbed limbs.

"I can't stand this any longer," I said to Mr. Frost. "One might as well get the smallpox as freeze to death. I'm going to knock at the door of this house and ask whether they have the confounded disease or not. If they say they have n't, I'm going in to warm myself and get something to eat."

I knocked at the door and it was opened by a pale-faced, weary-looking woman.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me whether you have smallpox in the house?" I inquired.

"Yes," she replied; "we have."

That was enough. I did not wait for particulars, but hastened back to the *teléga*, and said to Mr. Frost that, as we seemed to be between the devil and the deep sea, I was going for the bread-bag. Another disappointment, however, awaited me. The loaves not only were frozen to the consistency of geodes, but were completely covered with dust and sand that had been thrown up by the wheels of the *teléga*, and had sifted through the loose meshes of the homespun linen bag. I gave one of them to Mr. Frost, took another myself, and for three-quarters of an hour we

sat there in the deepening twilight, shivering with cold and gnawing frozen bread, while we waited for horses.

"O Kennan!" said Mr. Frost with a groan, "if I only had some warm milk-toast!"

But it was of no use to wish for such a luxury as warm milk-toast in the silver-mining district of Nérchinsk. What we had to do was to warm and aërate with imagination the food that we could get, and congratulate ourselves upon having escaped the smallpox. I proposed, however, that we should sit on the bread throughout the next stretch, and thus protect it to some extent from dust and the refrigerating influence of an arctic climate. The proposition was approved and adopted, but the result was merely to exchange one sort of discomfort for another.

Horses were forthcoming at last, and after another long, cold, and dreary ride we reached, about nine o'clock at night, the comfortable station of Shelapúgina, on the post-road between the town of Nérchinsk and the Nérchinski Zavód. I did not feel able to go any further that day, and as the postmaster assured us that there had never been a case of smallpox in the station, we brought in our baggage, drank tea, and, without removing our clothing, lay down as usual on our sheepskin overcoats upon the floor of the travelers' room. Monday morning, refreshed by a good night's sleep and a breakfast of tea, fresh bread, and fat soup, we resumed our journey and rode all day through shallow valleys, between low, treeless, and dreary-looking mountains, towards the Alexandrófski Zavód. The sky was clear and the sunshine inspiring; but the mercury had fallen to fifteen degrees below zero, our horses were white and shaggy with frost, the jolting of our vehicle made it difficult to keep our furs wrapped closely about us, and we suffered severely all day from cold. About half-past six o'clock in the evening we stopped for an hour to drink tea in a village whose name, Kavwíkuchigazamúrs-kaya, seemed to me to contain more letters than the place itself had inhabitants. We met there a young technologist



from St. Petersburg, who had been sent to the mines to teach the convicts the use of dynamite, and who was on his way home. He gave us a most gloomy account of life in the silver-mining district. The convict prisons, he said, were "the very worst in the Empire"; the officials were "cruel and incompetent"; the convicts were "ill-treated, beaten by everybody, with or without reason, forced to work when sick, and killed outright with explosives which the overseers were too ignorant or too careless to handle with proper precautions." He referred to the mining authorities with bitterness, as if his personal relations with them had been unpleasant; and, in view of that fact, it seemed to me prudent to take his statements with some allowance. I give them for what they may be worth in connection with my own later investigations.

Just before midnight on Tuesday we reached the village of Makárovo, 112 miles from Strétiusk, and stopped for the night in what was known as the *zémski kvartír*, a log house occupied by a peasant family whose duty it was to give food and shelter to traveling officials. As soon as possible after drinking tea we went to bed, Mr. Frost lying on the floor, while I stretched myself out on a bench near one of the windows. The room was intolerably hot, the pine logs of the walls in the vicinity of the oven emitted a strong resinous odor, the air was close and heavy, and for a long time I could not get to sleep. I had just lost consciousness, as it seemed to me, when I was aroused by a loud and prolonged "Cock-a-doo-oo-dle-doo-oo!" which proceeded, apparently, from a point distant only a few inches from my head. Upon investigating this singular phenomenon I discovered that the space under the bench upon which I lay had been inclosed with slats and turned into a chicken-coop. A large cock, thinking, doubtless, that it must be near morning, had put his head out and up through the slats, and crowed lustily in my very ear. This performance he repeated, at short intervals, throughout the remainder of the night, so that, although I finally took a position as

far away from him as possible on the floor, I could get little rest. I have slept in Siberian cabins with colts, dogs, cattle, and sheep, but one wakeful Shanghai rooster will make



THE ALEXANDRÓFSKI ZAVÓD.

more disturbance in a small room at night than a whole ark-load of quadrupeds.

We reached the Alexandrófski Zavód at ten o'clock Tuesday morning, and found it to be a dreary, dead-and-alive Siberian village of two or three hundred inhabitants, situated in the middle of a flat, uncultivated steppe, with a rickety, tumble-down bridge in the foreground, and low,

bare, snow-covered mountains in the distance. The convict prison, to which we were conducted by the warden, Mr. Fomin, proved to be nothing more than a *bogadiélnia*, or infirmary, to which were sent hopelessly disabled and broken-down convicts from other parts of the Nérchinsk mining district. The main building, which is shown on the right of the bridge in the illustration, on page 284, is a one-story log structure of the usual Kará type, and contained, at the time of our visit, 137 prisoners. It had been standing, the warden said, about half a century, and its sanitary condition, as might have been expected, was bad. The floors were dirty, the air in the cells was heavy and vitiated, and the corridors were filled with the stench of privies and neglected *paráshas*. In two of the *kámeras* we found lunatics living with their sane comrades. The hospital attached to the prison is small, but it was not overcrowded, and it seemed to me to be clean and in fairly good condition. The coarse linen on the cot beds was dirty, but the *feldsher*, or hospital-steward, said that this was not his fault. The supply of bed-linen was scanty, and he did the best he could with what was furnished him. He seemed to be very much gratified when I told him that his hospital, although small, impressed me as being the cleanest and best-managed institution of the kind that I had seen in the Trans-Baikál.

After having inspected the prison, Mr. Frost and I returned to Mr. Fomin's comfortable house, where we met the *isprávník* of Nérchinski Zavód, a tall, well-built, good-looking man about forty years of age, who was making a tour of his district. He was very pleasant and communicative, talked with us frankly about the Nérchinsk mines, and said, without hesitation, that the Government's management of them was "clumsy, incompetent, and wasteful." He thought that it would be much better for the country if the whole Nérchinsk silver-mining district were thrown open to private enterprise. Many of the engineers in the employ of the Government were either corrupt or incapable, and the

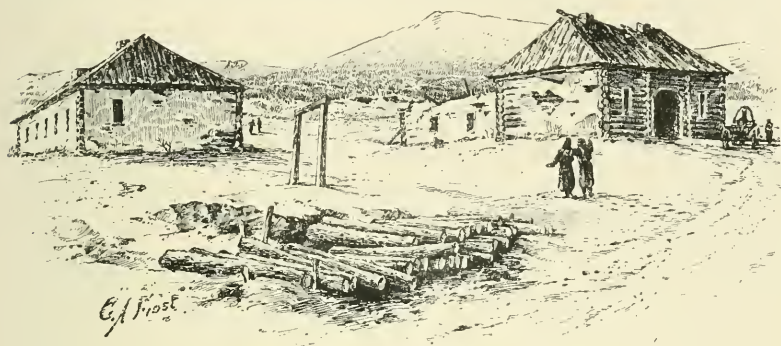
mines did not produce half as much silver as they ought. As an illustration of the existing state of affairs he referred to two gold placers in his district, which had been carefully examined by engineers of the Tsar's cabinet<sup>1</sup> and had been pronounced worthless. They had subsequently been sold or granted by the Tsar to private individuals, and had then produced 600 *puds*, or more than 27,000 pounds of pure gold. The *isprávník* intimated, although he did not explicitly say, that the Government engineers who examined the placers and declared them worthless were in league with the private individuals who desired to obtain title to them; and that the proceeds of this robbery of the Crown were shared by the parties to the corrupt agreement. I have no doubt that such was the case. The Tsar himself is constantly robbed and defrauded by the officials to whom he intrusts the management of his Siberian property.

After a good dinner of soup, fish, roasted grouse, vegetables, and compote of fruits, with *vódka* and two or three kinds of wine, which Mr. Fomin set out in honor of his guests, the *isprávník*, the warden, Mr. Frost, and I started with two *tróikas* of horses for the mine of Akatúi, which was distant about twelve miles. This mine had long before been abandoned by the Government and had filled with water; but I was particularly anxious to see how it was situated, partly because it once had been the most dreaded place of punishment in all Siberia, and partly because the Government was then making preparations to transport to it all of the political convicts at the mines of Kará. The road ran across the desolate steppe to the foot of a low mountain range six or eight miles northwest of the Zavód, and then entered a shallow valley between rounded and perfectly barren hills, about a thousand feet in height,

<sup>1</sup> Nearly all the mines in this part of the Trans-Baikál belong to the Tsar in person and are known as the "cabinet mines." How the Tsar acquired title to them I do not know. An educated Russian gentleman of my acquaintance began the compilation of a work that he intended to publish abroad under the title, "The Origin of the Wealth of the Románofs," but he was sent to Siberia before he could complete his investigation.



whose snowy slopes limited the vision in every direction. As we ascended this valley the hills shut it in more and more closely, until, a mile and a half or two miles beyond the small village of Akatúi, it became a secluded and inexpressibly dreary glen, where there were no signs of life except the stunted and leafless bushes which here and there



OLD POLITICAL PRISON AT THE MINE OF AKATÚI.

broke the uniform whiteness of the snow-covered hills. It seemed to me that I had never seen a place so lonely, so cheerless, so isolated from all the living world. It might have been a valley among the arctic hills of Greenland near the Pole.

"Here is the old political prison," said the *isprávník*; and as he spoke we stopped in front of a peculiar, half-ruined log building, which had once apparently been covered with stucco or plaster, and through the middle of which ran a high-arched gateway. On the flanks of this structure, and forty or fifty yards from it, stood two weather-beaten prisons of stuccoed brick, one of them roofless, and both gradually falling into ruins. It was evident that these prisons had once been surrounded by a stockade, and that the log building with the arched gateway was the corps-de-garde through which admission was had to the inclosure. The stockade, however, had long before disappeared, the iron gratings had been removed from the windows, and little remained to indicate to a careless observer the real nature

of the ruins or the purposes that they had served. I alighted from my *teléga* and entered the prison on the right of the corps-de-garde, thinking that I might discover a mural inscription left by some lonely and unhappy prisoner, or perhaps find one of the iron rings or staples in the wall to which refractory convicts were chained. Every scrap of iron, however, that could be used elsewhere had been stripped from the building; the floors had rotted away; the plaster had fallen; and nothing whatever remained to suggest to one's imagination the unwritten history of the gloomy prison, or bear witness to the cruelties and tragedies that had given to Akatúi its evil fame. The prison on the left of the corps-de-garde was in a much better state of repair than the other, and would doubtless have repaid a careful examination; but its windows were fastened, its heavy plank doors were secured with padlocks, and the warden said he did not know where the keys were or how we could gain admission. The entrance to the mine of Akatúi was on the hillside, five or six hundred feet above the bottom of the valley, and we could just see, in the deepening twilight, the outlines of a small tool-house that stood near the mouth of the shaft. At an earlier hour of the day I should have proposed to visit it; but the darkness of night was already gathering in the valley, the air was bitterly cold, and as the *isprávník* and the warden seemed anxious to return to the Zavód I was obliged to content myself with such an examination of Akatúi as could be made in the vicinity of the prisons. Lúnin, one of the Decembrist conspirators of 1825, lived and died in penal servitude at this mine, and somewhere in the neighborhood lie buried many of the Polish patriots sent to Akatúi after the insurrection of 1863. I was unable, however, to find their graves. The Russian Government does not take pains to perpetuate the memory of the political offenders whom it tortures to death in its Siberian prisons, and over the moldering bodies of most of them there is not so much as a mound. Since my return from Siberia a new prison

has been erected in the dreary valley of Akatúi, and to it have been transported many political convicts from Kará. The intention of the Government is to pump the water out of the abandoned mine and set the politicals at work in its damp and gloomy galleries. The change, of course, will be for the worse. If there is in Siberia a more lonely, a more cheerless, a more God-forsaken place than Kará, it is the snowy, secluded valley of Akatúi.

At a late hour Tuesday night we returned to the Alexandrófski Zavód, and about noon on Wednesday, after a refreshing night's sleep and a good breakfast, we set out for the mine of Algachí, distant about twenty-two miles. There was little, if any, change in the appearance of the country, as we made our way slowly into the silver-mining district. One range of low, barren, round-topped mountains succeeded another, like great ocean swells, with hardly a sign of life or vegetation, except in the shallow haystack-dotted valleys. From the summit of the last divide that we crossed before reaching Algachí, the country, which we could see for thirty miles, looked like a boundless ocean suddenly frozen solid in the midst of a tremendous Cape Horn gale when the seas were running mountain-high. Far down in a snowy trough between two of these mighty surges we could just make out a little cluster of unpainted log-houses, which our driver said was the mining village of Algachí. I wondered, as we stopped for a moment on the summit to look at it, whether in all the world one could find a settlement situated in a more dreary and desolate spot. As far as the eye could see there was not a tree, nor a dark object of any kind, to break the ghastly whiteness of the rolling ocean of snowy mountains; and it was not hard to imagine that the village itself was nothing more than a little collection of floating driftwood, caught in the trough of the sea at the moment when the tremendous billows were suddenly turned to snow and ice. We descended the steep slope of the mountain to the village by a stony, zigzag road, entered a long, dirty, straw-littered street between two rows of un-

painted wooden houses, passed through several herds of cattle that sheepskin-coated boys were driving in from pasture, and finally stopped, amid a crowd of curious idlers, in front of the *zémiski kvartír*, or official lodging-house, where we intended to spend the night. It was already five o'clock,—too late for a visit to the prison or an inspection of the mine,—and as soon as we had brought in our baggage and explained to the people of the house who we were, we set about the preparation of supper. Our resources were rather limited, but our peasant hostess furnished a steaming *samorár* with a little milk and butter, Mr. Frost produced, with triumph, a can of Californian preserved peaches, which he said he had bought in Strétnsk “for a holiday,” and we thawed out and toasted on a stick, before a cheerful open fire, some of our frozen, sand-powdered bread. Altogether we made out so good a supper that Mr. Frost’s imagination never once suggested to him the desirability of milk-toast, and we went to bed on the floor about nine o'clock—warm, comfortable, and happy.

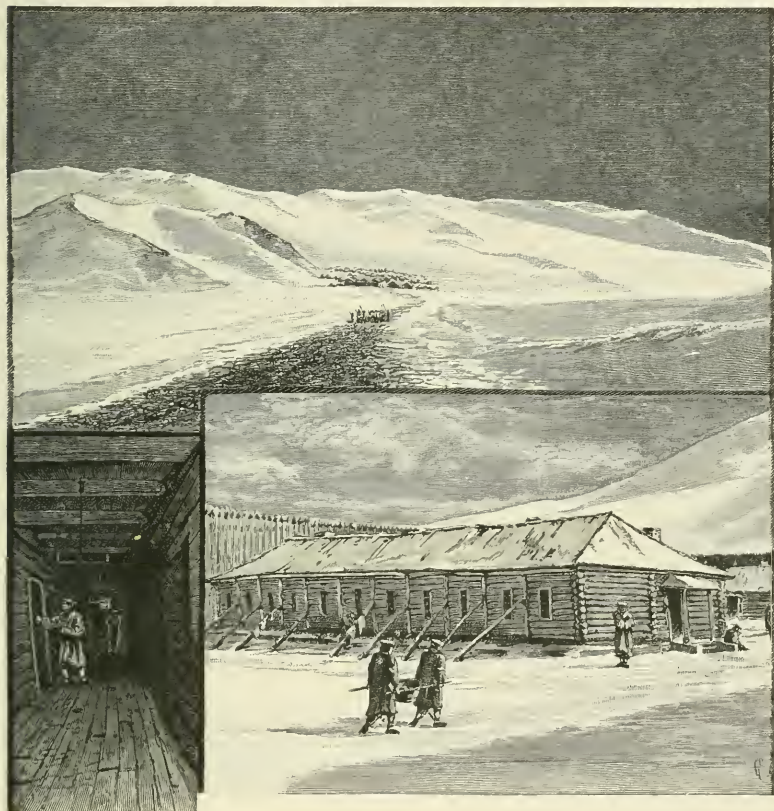
Wednesday morning, after breakfast, we called upon Mr. Nésterof, the resident mining engineer, and Lieutenant-colonel Saltstein, the warden of the prison, for the purpose of getting permission to examine and investigate. Mr. Nésterof received us with generous Russian hospitality, insisted upon our taking a supplementary breakfast with him, and filled and refilled our glasses with *vódka*, cordial, Crimean wine, and Boston canned lemonade, until we feared that we should have to postpone our investigations indefinitely. Lieutenant-colonel Saltstein, who lived in a large, comfortable house full of blossoming oleanders, geraniums, and abutilon, then declared that we must drink another bottle of wine and eat a third breakfast with him, and it was after one o'clock when we finally set out for the prison and the mine.

Lieutenant-colonel Saltstein was a Finn by birth, and spoke Russian badly and with a strong German accent, but



he seemed to be honest and trustworthy, and talked to me with great frankness and good-humor.

"I am afraid," he said, as we drove through the village street, "that you will find our prison the worst you have



1. THE VALLEY AND MINING SETTLEMENT OF ALGACHÍ. 2. THE PRISON AT ALGACHÍ.  
3. THE PRISON CORRIDOR.

ever seen. It is very old and in bad condition, but I can't do much to improve it. We are too far away from Peter" [St. Petersburg.]

I replied reassuringly that I did not think it could be worse than the common-criminal prison at Ust Kará, and said that I had had experience enough to understand some

of the difficulties in the way of prison reform. He said nothing, but shook his head doubtfully, as if he thought that my experience would not be complete until I had examined the prison at Algachí. We presently stopped in front of a high log stockade, and, alighting from our vehicle, were received by a sentry with presented arms and then admitted by the officer of the day to a spacious courtyard, in the middle of which stood the prison. It was a long, low, quadrangular building of squared logs, with a plain board roof, a small porch and a door at one end, and a long row of heavily grated windows. It seemed to me at first sight to be falling down. The wall on the side next to us had sunk into the ground until it was apparently two feet or more out of plumb, and, so far as I could see, nothing prevented it from giving way altogether except a row of logs braced against it nearly at a right angle on the side towards which it leaned. All of the walls, at some remote time in the past, had been covered with plaster or stucco and then whitewashed; but this superficial coating had fallen off here and there in patches, giving to the building a most dilapidated appearance. It was, manifestly, a very old prison; but exactly how old, Lieutenant-colonel Saltstein could not tell me. For aught that he knew to the contrary it might have been standing since the opening of the mine in 1817. We entered the door at one end of the building and found ourselves in a long, dark, foul-smelling corridor, which was lighted only at the ends, and which divided the prison longitudinally into halves. Immediately to the left of the door as we entered was the pharmacy, and next to it a large square *kámara* used as a hospital or lazaret. In the latter were eight or ten low beds, upon which, under dirty, and in some cases bloody, sheets, were lying eight or ten sick or wounded convicts, whose faces were whiter, more emaciated, and more ghastly than any I had yet seen. Two or three of them, the warden said, had just been torn and shattered by a premature explosion of dynamite in the mine. The atmosphere of the lazaret, polluted by over-

respiration, heavy with the fevered breath of the sick, and pervaded by a faint odor of liniment and drugs, was so insufferable that I was glad, after a quick glance about the room, to escape into the corridor. The first regular *kámara* that we examined was about twenty-two feet square and seven or eight feet high, with two windows, a large brick oven, and a plank sleeping-platform extending around three of its sides. There was no provision for ventilation, and the air was almost, if not quite, as bad as in the worst cells of the prisons at Ust Kará. I could breathe enough of it to sustain life, and that was all. The first thing that particularly attracted my attention, after I entered the *kámara*, was a broad band of dull red which extended around the dingy, whitewashed walls, just above the sleeping-platform, like a spotty dado of iron rust. Noticing that I was looking at it with curiosity, Lieutenant-colonel Saltstein remarked, with a half-humorous, half-cynical smile, that the prisoners had been "trying to paint their walls red."

"What is it, any way?" I inquired, and stepping to one end of the sleeping-platform I made a closer examination. The dull-red band at once resolved itself into a multitude of contiguous or overlapping blood-stains, with here and there the dried and flattened body of a bedbug sticking to the whitewash. I had no further difficulty in guessing the nature and significance of the discoloration. The tortured and sleepless prisoners had been "trying to paint their walls red" by crushing bedbugs with their hands, as high up as they could reach while lying on the *nári*, and in this way had so stained the dingy whitewash with their own blood that at a little distance there seemed to be a dado of iron rust around the three sides of the *kámara* where they slept. How many years this had been going on, how many thousand convicts had helped to "paint" those "walls red," I do not know; but I had suffered enough in Siberia myself from vermin fully to understand and appreciate the significance of that dull-red band.

It is unnecessary to describe in detail the other *kámeras*

of this wretched prison. They were all precisely like the first one except that they differed slightly in dimensions. All were overerowed, all were swarming with vermin, and the air in them was polluted almost beyond endurance. At the time of our visit the prison as a whole contained 169 convicts—about twice the number for which there was adequate air space.

At the first favorable opportunity I said to Lieutenant-colonel Saltstein: "I cannot understand why you allow such a prison as this to exist. You have here 169 convicts. Only forty or fifty of them work in the mine; the rest lie all day in these foul cells in idleness. Why don't you take them out to the nearest forest, set them to work cutting timber, make them drag the logs to the village, and have them build a better and larger prison for themselves? They would be glad to do it, the expense would be trifling, and in a few months you would have here a prison fit for a human being to live in."

"My dear sir," he replied,<sup>1</sup> "I cannot send convicts into the woods without orders to do so. Suppose some of them should escape,—as they probably would,—I should be held responsible and should lose my place. I don't dare to do anything that I have not been ordered to do by the prison department. The authorities in St. Petersburg are aware of the condition of this prison. I have reported on it year after year. As long as five years ago, after calling attention as urgently as I dared to the state of affairs, I received orders to consult with the district architect and draw up a plan and estimates for a new prison. I did so; but you know how such things go. Letters are two or three months in reaching St. Petersburg from here. When our plans and estimates finally get there they go to the prison department, where they have to take their turn with hundreds of other documents from hundreds of other prisons in all parts of the Empire. Perhaps for months they are not even

<sup>1</sup> I do not pretend to quote Lieutenant-colonel Saltstein's exact words, but I give accurately, I think, the substance of his statements.



looked at. Finally they are examined, and some decision is reached with regard to them. If they require an extraordinary expenditure of money they may have to go to the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Finance, or await the making up of the budget for the next fiscal year. In any event twelve months or more elapse before their fate is finally determined. Somewhere and by somebody objection is almost sure to be made, either to the plans themselves, or to the amount of money that they require, and the documents are returned to us for modification or amendment in accordance with the suggestions of some official who knows little or nothing about our needs and circumstances. Thus, a year or more after the departure for St. Petersburg of our plans and estimates they come back to us for alteration. We alter them in such a way as to meet the views of our superiors and send them to St. Petersburg again. In the meantime the *personnel* of the prison department has perhaps changed. New officials have taken the places of the old; new ideas with regard to prisons and prison reform have become prevalent; and our modified plans and estimates, which would have satisfied the prison authorities of 1880, are found defective by the prison authorities of 1882. After the lapse of another period of sixteen or eighteen months the papers again come back to us for revision and alteration. And so it goes on, year after year. Plans and estimates for a new prison at the mine of Algachí have been in existence ever since 1880. Meanwhile they have twice been to St. Petersburg and back, and are now there for the third time. What are you going to do about it? Even when the erection of a new prison has been authorized, the work proceeds very slowly. It is now almost ten years since the Government actually began to build a new brick prison at the mine of Górní Zerentúí, and the carpenters have n't even got the roof on, to say nothing about floors."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This prison was not finished until the Chief Prison Administration for 1888—three years later. (Report of 1888, p. 99.)

"But," I said, "such a system is all wrong; there's no sense in such management. What is the use of corresponding for years with indifferent officials in St. Petersburg about a matter that might be settled in twenty-four hours by the governor of the province, or even by a petty *isprávník*? All over Eastern Siberia I have found miserable, decaying, tumble-down log prisons, and everywhere in such prisons I have seen able-bodied convicts living month after month in absolute idleness. The country is full of trees suitable for timber, you have plenty of labor that costs you nothing, every Russian peasant knows how to put up a log building—why don't you let your idle convicts build prisons for themselves?"

"We have n't a strong enough convoy here to guard convicts in the woods," said the warden; "they would escape."

"That is no reason," I replied. "It is easy enough for a Government like yours to strengthen the convoy during the time that the timber is being cut; and suppose that a few of the prisoners do escape! From my point of view it would be better to let half of them escape than to keep them shut up in idleness in such a prison as this. Nobody yet has given me a satisfactory explanation of the fact that, although hundreds, if not thousands, of convicts lie idle for months or years in overcrowded and decaying log prisons, no attempt is made to utilize their labor in the erection of larger and better buildings."<sup>1</sup>

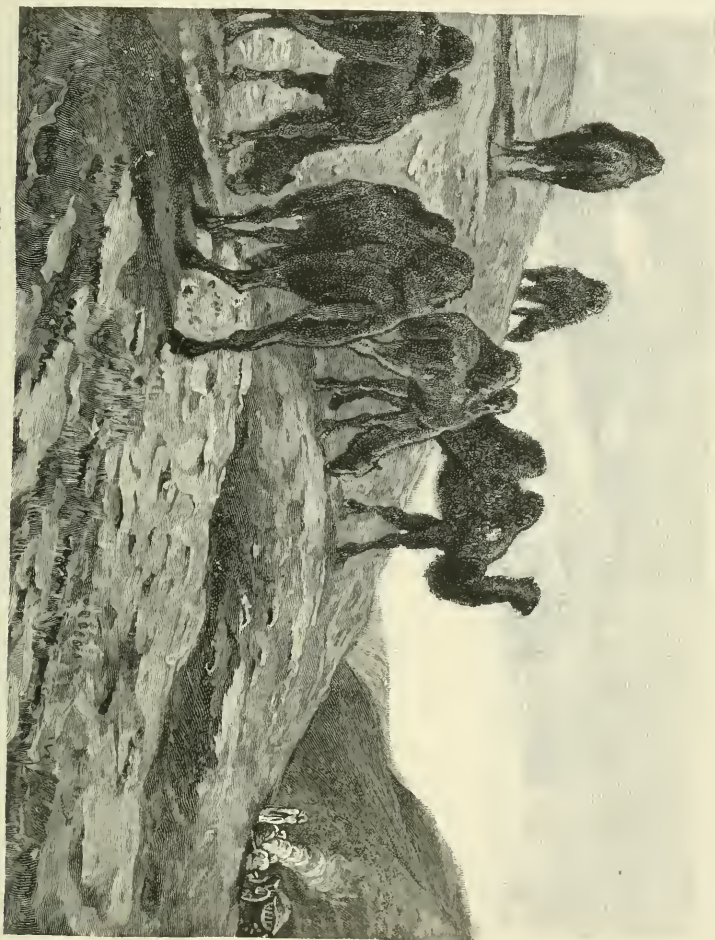
The warden shrugged his shoulders in the significant Russian way, but did not pursue the subject. I have never seen any reason to change the opinion that I formed at Algachí with regard to this prison. As a place of confinement, even for the worst class of offenders, it was a disgrace

<sup>1</sup> Since this chapter was written, convict labor has been utilized, as here suggested, in the erection of a new exile forwarding prison at Alexándrofsk, a short distance from Irkútsk. The building was put up under the immediate personal supervision of

State Councillor Petróf, of the Irkútsk provincial administration, in a much shorter time than was anticipated, and at a cost twenty-five per cent below the estimates. (Report of the Chief Prison Administration for 1888, p. 103.)

to a civilized state, and the negligence, indifference, and incompetence shown by the Government in dealing with its admitted evils were absolutely inexcusable.

CAMELS GRAZING IN THE SNOW NEAR THE ALGACHI MINE.



After having thanked Lieutenant-colonel Saltstein for his hospitality, and for his courtesy in showing us the prison, Mr. Frost and I set out, with Mr. Nésterof, for the Algachí mine, which is situated about a mile from the village, on the northern slope of one of the great mountain

waves that form the valley. The day was clear and pleasant, but very cold; the ground was everywhere covered with snow, and a most dreary arctic landscape was presented to us as we rode from the prison down into the valley. A few hundred yards from the village our attention was attracted to half a dozen dark objects—apparently animals of some kind—on the white slope of the adjacent hill.

"I verily believe," said Mr. Frost, after a prolonged stare at them, "that they're camels!"

"Camels!" I exclaimed incredulously. "Who ever heard of camels at the mines of Nérechinsk? and how could they live in such a climate as this?"

As we drew nearer to them, however, it became evident that camels they were. To whom they belonged, whence they had come, and whither they were going I do not know; but it seemed strange enough to see a herd of great double-humped Bactrian camels nibbling the tufts of frost-bitten grass that appeared here and there above the snow in the foreground of that bleak, desolate arctic landscape.

If we had expected to find at the mine of Algachí the buildings, the steam-engines, the hoisting machinery, and the stamp-mills that would have marked the location of an American mine, we should have been greatly disappointed. The mining-plant consisted of a powder-magazine, a roofed-over cellar used for the storage of dynamite, a shanty or two, and a small log tool-house which served also as a smithy, a repair shop, a crushing and sorting room, and a guard-house. In the building last mentioned half a dozen convicts, including two or three women, were breaking up ore with short hammers and sorting it into piles, an overseer was sharpening a drill on an old worn grindstone, and three or four soldiers were lounging on a low bench, over which, in a rack against the wall, hung their Berdan rifles. It was, without exception, the most feeble exhibition of mining activity that I had ever witnessed.

Mr. Nésterof did not seem inclined to go down into the mine with us, but turned us over to one of the convicts,



who, he said, would show us all that there was to be seen. Meanwhile he himself would attend to some matters of business and await our reappearance. Our guide gave to each of us an unsheltered tallow candle, with a piece of paper wrapped around it, provided himself with a similar light, thrust half a dozen dynamite cartridges about as big as cannon firecrackers into the breast of his sheepskin coat in such a manner as to leave the long white fuses hanging out, and said that he was ready. We followed him out of the tool-house, ascended the mountain-side about a hundred yards, and entered through a narrow wooden door a low horizontal gallery, the sides of which were timbered, and upon whose inclined floor had been laid a rude wooden tramway. Stopping for a moment just inside the door to light our candles, we groped our way in a half-crouching attitude along the low gallery, our convict guide stumbling now and then over the loose planks in such a way as to suggest to my mind the idea that he would eventually fall down, bring the flame of his light into contact with the dangling fuses of his dynamite cartridges, and blow us all out of the tunnel like wads from a Fourth-of-July cannon. About 150 feet from the entrance we came to the black, unguarded mouth of the main shaft, out of which projected the end of a worn, icy ladder. Down this our guide climbed with practised ease, shouting back at us a warning to be careful where we stepped, since some of the rungs were missing and the ladders were set diagonally parallel with one another at such an angle as to necessitate a long stride across the shaft from the bottom of one to the top of the next. We were not half as much afraid, however, of losing our foothold as we were of being blown into fragments by an accidental explosion of his dynamite cartridges. I still had a vivid remembrance of the ghastly forms lying under the bloody sheets in the prison hospital, and every time I looked down and saw the guide's candle swaying back and forth in close proximity to the white fuses that hung out of the breast of his sheepskin coat I could not help imagining

the appearance that I should present when laid out for surgical treatment, or perhaps for burial, on one of those dirty prison cots.

As we slowly descended into the depths of the mine, sometimes on ladders and sometimes on slippery notched logs, I became conscious of a peculiar, unpleasant odor, which I presumed to be due to a recent explosion of dynamite in one of the adjacent galleries. Our candles began to burn blue and finally went out altogether, matches could hardly be made to light, and we found ourselves clinging to a worn ladder, in total darkness, over a bottomless abyss, wondering how long air that would not support combustion would support life. We did not feel any sensation of oppression, nor did we seem to be in any immediate danger of asphyxiation; but there was evidently very little of oxygen in the air, and we were not a little relieved when, by dint of striking innumerable matches, we succeeded in groping our way down two or three more ladders to the mouth of a gallery where our candles would again burn. Along this gallery we proceeded for a hundred yards or more, clambering here and there over piles of glittering ore which convicts were carrying on small hand-barrows to one of the hoisting shafts. The temperature of the mine seemed to be everywhere below the freezing point, and in many places the walls and roof were thickly incrustated with frost-crystals, which sparkled in the candlelight as if the gallery were lined with gems. After wandering about hither and thither in a maze of low, narrow passages, we came to another shaft, and descended another series of worn, icy ladders to the deepest part of the mine. Here six or eight men were at work getting out ore and drilling holes in the rock for the insertion of blasting cartridges. Their tools and appliances were of the rudest, most primitive description, and the way in which the work was being carried on would have brought a contemptuous smile to the face of a Nevada miner. The air almost everywhere on the lower level had been exhausted of its oxygen and vitiated by ex-

plosives to such an extent that our candles went out almost as fast as we could relight them ; but no adequate provision had been made for renewing the air supply. The only ventilating apparatus in use was a circular iron fan, or blower, which a single convict turned by means of a clumsy wooden crank. It made a loud rumbling noise that could be heard all over the lower part of the mine, but, as there were no pipes to it or from it, it was absolutely useless. It merely agitated the impure air a little in the immediate vicinity, and so far as desirable results were concerned the convict who operated it might as well have turned a grindstone.

After wandering about the mine for half an hour, examining at various points the silver-bearing veins, collecting specimens of the ore, and watching the work of the sheep-skin-coated convicts, we retraced our steps to the bottom of the main shaft, laboriously climbed up thirty or forty ladders and notched logs to the upper level, and returned to the tool-house.

A cold, piercing wind was blowing across the desolate mountain-side, and ten or fifteen shivering convicts who had finished their day's task, and were standing in a group near the tool-house asked permission of Mr. Nésterof to return to their prison, where they might at least keep warm. He told them rather roughly that the day's output of ore had not all been "sorted," and that they must wait. There was no place where they could go for shelter; they had had nothing to eat since morning; and for an hour and a half or more they were compelled to stand out-of-doors on the snow, exposed to a piercing wind, in a temperature below zero, while the "sorters" in the tool-house were finishing their work. It was, perhaps, a trivial thing, but it showed a hardness and indifference to suffering on the part of the mining officials that went far to confirm the statements made to us by the young technologist from St. Petersburg. Mr. Nésterof seemed to be irritated by the very reasonable request of the half-frozen convicts as if it were an evidence of impudence and insubordination.

After watching for a few moments the breaking up and sorting of the ore in the tool-house we drove to the Pokrófski mine, which was situated on the side of another bare mountain ridge about four miles farther to the northward. The country between the two mines was as dreary



THE POKRÓFSKI MINE.

and desolate as any we had yet traversed. Not a tree nor a bush was to be seen in any direction, and the rolling, snow-clad mountains suggested in general contour the immense surges and mounds of water raised by a hurricane at sea. The buildings at the entrance to the mine consisted of a tool-house like that at the mine of Algachí, a magazine or storehouse, a few A-shaped shanties, in which lived the convicts of the free command, and two small prisons, one of which was apparently new. On the summit of a rocky ridge just over these buildings were two sentry-boxes, in each of which stood an armed soldier on guard. Mr. Frost, who was very tired, did not care to inspect any more mines, and taking a position on the snow near the tool-house he proceeded, with hands encased in thick gloves, to make a sketch of the scene, while Mr. Nésterof and I, under the guidance of a convict, descended the main shaft. The Pokrófski mine did not differ essentially from that of Algachí, except that it was not so extensive nor so deep.



The air in it was damp and comparatively warm, water dripped from the roofs of the galleries into little pools here and there on the floors, and the ladders in the main shaft were slippery with mud. Why it should thaw in this mine and freeze in the mine of Algachí, only four miles away, I could not understand, nor did Mr. Nésterof seem to be able to give me a satisfactory explanation. In the mine of Algachí there was no water, and the galleries for seventy-five or a hundred feet together were lined with frost-crystals and ice. In the mine of Pokrófski there was no ice at all, and the shaft and galleries were dripping with moisture. The air in the Pokrófski mine seemed to be pure, and our candles everywhere burned freely. Only a few men were at work, and they seemed to be engaged in hauling up ore in small buckets by means of a cable and a primitive hand-windlass.

After climbing up and down slippery ladders until I was covered with mud, and walking in a bent posture through



THE POKRÓFSKI PRISON.

low galleries until my back ached, I told Mr. Nésterof that I was satisfied, and we returned, tired and bathed in perspiration, to the tool-house. The convict who had accompanied us through the mine blew out his tallow candle, and without taking the trouble completely to extinguish the wick laid it, still all aglow, in a small wooden box,

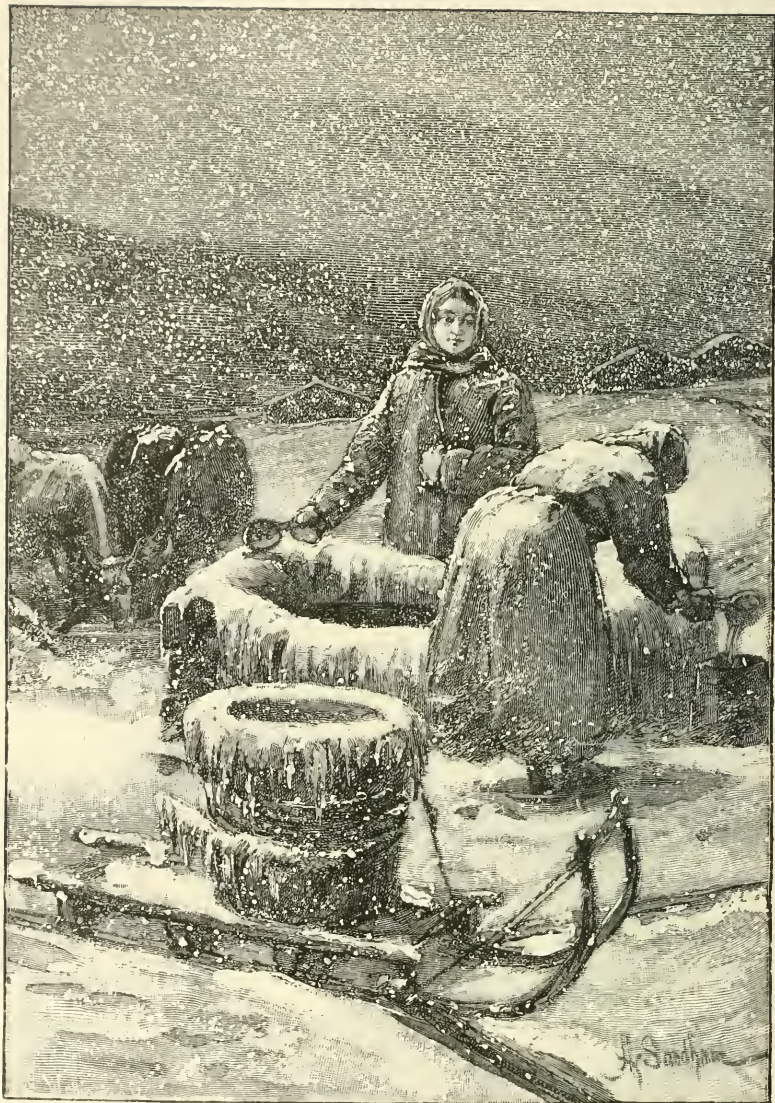
which contained among other things a dynamite cartridge big enough to blow the whole tool-house into the air. I did not regard myself as naturally timorous or nervous, but when the convict shut down the lid of that box over the long glowing wick of a tallow candle and a dynamite cartridge with fuse attached, I had business out-of-doors. When I thought time enough had elapsed for the wick to go out, I reëntered the house, washed my muddy hands in the grindstone trough, inspected Mr. Frost's sketches, and asked Mr. Nésterof a long series of questions about the mines.

The silver-bearing veins or lodes in the mines of Algachí and Pokrófski vary in thickness from 12 or 14 inches to 5 or 6 feet. The ore, which has a bright glittering appearance, consists of silver and lead in the proportion of about 1 to 100, with a greater or less admixture of what the Russian miners call *zínkovi obmánka*, or "zinc deceit." As the metal last named is much less fusible than lead, it becomes very troublesome in the reducing furnaces, and, so far as possible, the miners get rid of it by breaking up the ore into small pieces and discarding that part of it in which the zinc predominates. The work of crushing and sorting is performed by the weaker male convicts and the women, and is regarded as the lightest form of hard labor. It is about equivalent to breaking stones on the road with a heavy, short-handled hammer. Out of the mines of Algachí and Pokrófski, which are the most productive in the district, there are taken every year nearly 400 short tons of ore, which, when reduced, yields about 1440 pounds of silver, valued at \$20,000, and 144,000 pounds of lead. The lead, owing to the expense of transportation to a market, is virtually worthless, and at the time of our visit nearly 2000 tons of it were lying at the Kutomárski Zavód, where the ore from these mines for many years has been reduced. The average number of convicts employed in the two mines is 220, and each of them gets out 3600 pounds of ore a year, or about 10 pounds a day. These figures alone are

enough to show how feebly and inefficiently the mines are worked. Until the early part of 1885 the convicts were sent down the shafts every day in the year with the exception of a few great church holy days, but since that time they have been allowed two days' rest a month, viz., the 1st and the 15th. They work by stents or "tasks," which can be completed by able-bodied men in from eight to ten hours. They receive, in quantity and kind, substantially the same food and clothing that are given to the hard-labor convicts at the mines of Kará, and their maintenance costs the Government about \$40 a year, or a little less than 11 cents a day per capita.

Regarded as places of punishment the Nérchinsk mines did not seem to me so terrible as they are often represented to be. It is not very pleasant, of course, to work eight or ten hours every day in a damp or icy gallery 300 feet underground; but even such employment is, I think, less prejudicial to health than unbroken confinement in a dirty, overcrowded, and foul-smelling convict prison. The mines are badly ventilated and the gases liberated in them by the explosives used are doubtless injurious; but there are no deadly fumes or exhalations from poisonous ores like cinabar to affect the health of the laborers, and experience seems to show that the death-rate is no higher among the convicts who go regularly every day into the mines than among those who lie idle day after day in the vitiated air of the prison *kámeras*. If I were permitted to make choice between complete idleness in such a prison as that of Algachí or Ust Kará and regular daily labor in the mines, I should, without hesitation, choose the latter. So far as I could ascertain by careful inquiry among the convicts themselves, no one has ever been compelled to live and sleep in these mines day and night, and I believe that all the stories to that effect published from time to time are wholly imaginary and fictitious. The working force may occasionally have been divided into day and night gangs, or shifts, sent into the mines alternately, but the same men have never





THE VILLAGE WELL AT ALGACHÍ.

been required to remain there continuously for twenty-four hours. At the present time there is no night work and all of the convicts return to their prisons before dark, or, in the

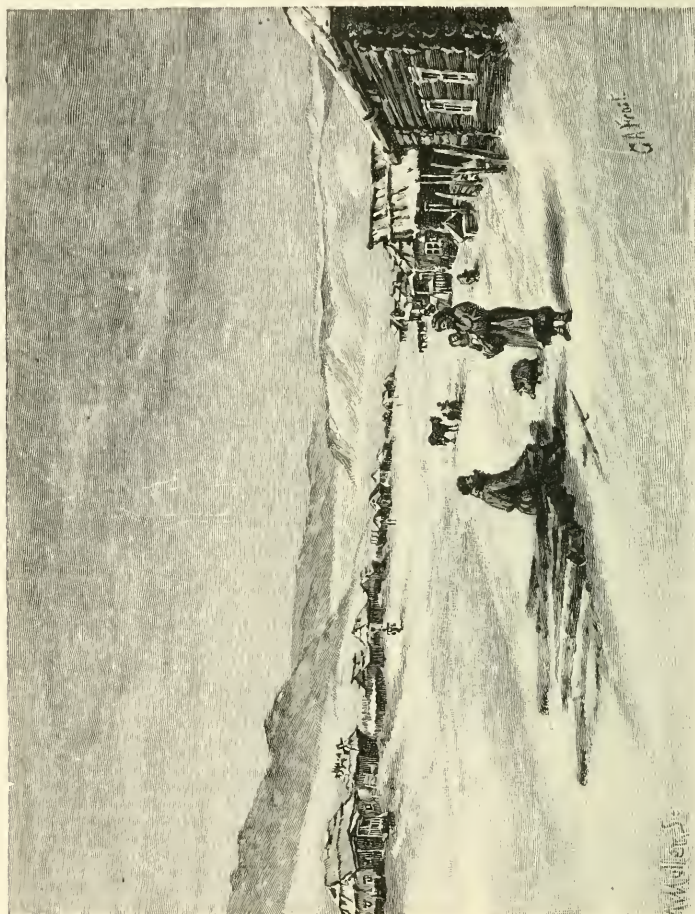


short days of mid-winter, very soon after dark. I do not wish to be understood as saying that the life of Russian convicts at the Nérchinsk silver mines is an easy one, or that they do not suffer. I can hardly imagine a more terrible and hopeless existence than that of a man who works all day in one of the damp, muddy galleries of the Pokrófski mine, and goes back at night to a close, foul, vermin-infested prison like that of Algachí. It is worse than the life of any pariah dog, but at the same time it is not the sensationally terrible life of the fictitious convict described by Mr. Grenville Murray—the convict who lives night and day underground, sleeps in a rocky niche, toils in hopeless misery under the lash of a pitiless overseer, and is slowly poisoned to death by the fumes of quicksilver. Such things may be effective in a sensational drama, but they are not true. The worst feature of penal servitude in Siberia is not hard labor in the mines; it is the condition of the prisons.

When Mr. Frost, Mr. Nésterof, and I returned from the Pokrófski mine to the village of Algachí it was beginning to grow dark, and the village girls were watering their cows and filling their icy buckets at a curbed spring or well near the *zémski kvartír*. We drove to the house of Mr. Nésterof for dinner, spent an hour or two in conversation, and devoted the remainder of the evening to writing up notebooks and completing sketches.

Friday morning, November 20th, we bade Mr. Nésterof and Lieutenant-colonel Saltstein good-by, and set out with two horses, a small uncomfortable *teléga*, and a fresh supply of provisions for the village and mine of Kadáiya, distant from Algachí about ninety miles. The weather was still very cold, the road ran through the same dreary, desolate sea of snow-covered mountains that surrounds the mine of Algachí, and for two days we neither saw nor heard anything of particular interest. At half-past eleven o'clock Friday night, tired, hungry, and half frozen, we reached the village of Donó, forty-six miles from Algachí; Satur-

day afternoon we passed the Kutomárski Zavód, where we stopped for two or three hours to examine the smelting works; and early Sunday morning, after having traveled nearly all night at the expense of not a little suffering from



THE VILLAGE OF KADÁIYA.

cold and hunger, we finally reached the miserable, forlorn mining village of Kadáiya, found the *zémski kvartír*, and as soon as we could warm and refresh ourselves a little with tea went promptly to bed—Mr. Frost on top of the large brick oven, and I on the floor.

About ten o'clock Sunday forenoon we got up, somewhat rested and refreshed, and after a hasty and rather unsatisfactory breakfast of bread and tea went out into the broad, snowy, and deserted street of the village—Mr. Frost to make a sketch, and I to find the *ustávshchik*, or officer in charge of the mine.

The Kadaínski mine, which is one of the oldest and most extensive silver mines in the Nérchinsk district, is situated on the side of a bold, steep, round-topped mountain about 300 yards from the village and 200 or 300 feet above it. It has been worked for more than a century, and was at one time very productive; but the richest veins of ore in it have been exhausted, and it does not now yield nearly as much silver as the Pokrófski mine or the mine of Algachí.

The *ustávshchik*, whom I found at work in a log house near the mine, and who seemed to be an intelligent and well-educated Siberian peasant, received me pleasantly but with some surprise, read my letters of introduction, expressed his willingness to show me everything that I desired to see, and in ten minutes we were on our way to the mine. In the tool-house, which stood over the mouth of the main shaft, I put on the outer dress of one of the convicts,—which I soon found to be full of vermin,—the *ustávshchik* donned a long, mud-stained *khalát*, a battered uniform cap, and a pair of heavy leather mittens, and providing ourselves with tallow candles we lowered ourselves into the black mouth of the Voskresénski or Ascension shaft. After descending ten or twelve ladders, we reached, at a depth of about 120 feet, a spacious chamber from which radiated three or four horizontal galleries much wider and higher than any that I had seen in the mines of Pokrófski and Algachí. The floor of the chamber was covered with water to a depth of three or four inches and moisture was dripping everywhere from the walls. At a depth of 200 feet we reached another landing and entered the mouth of a very wide and high gallery leading away into the heart of the mountain. There had just been a blast somewhere in this

part of the mine, and as we proceeded through the gallery, which was filled with powder smoke, I could see absolutely nothing except the faint glimmer of the *ustárvshchik's* candle in the mist ahead. Guided by that, I stumbled along the



THE MOUNTAINS PIERCED BY KADÁNSKI MINE.

uneven floor of the gallery, stepping now and then into a hole or splashing into a pool of water, and imagining for an instant that I had tumbled into an abandoned shaft. In one place we passed a very extensive excavation, out of which the *ustárvshchik* said an immense body of ore had been taken as long ago as the middle of the last century.

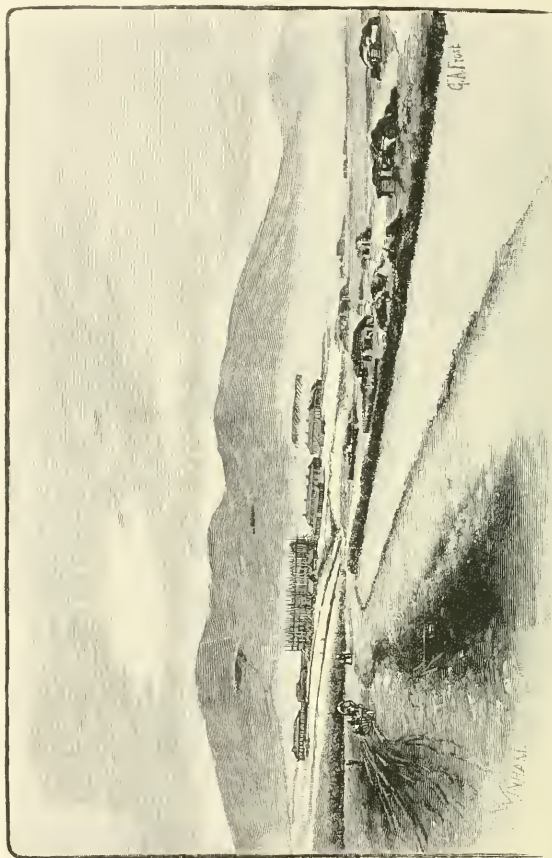


A vast area of roof had been left supported by quadrangular piles of crossed logs, which were so black from lapse of time that they were hardly recognizable as wood, and in many cases so soft that I could take pinches of rotten fiber out of them with my fingers. This part of the mine the *ustávshchik* said was regarded as very dangerous, and he did not think it prudent to go any farther. From the point where we turned to retrace our steps black, irregular caverns could still be seen stretching away in every direction—some upward, some horizontally, and some downward at a steep angle into an abyss of darkness. It was evident that the ore had been followed wherever it went and scooped out in the cheapest and most expeditious manner possible, without regard to safety, and with little attention to timbering. It was the most dangerous-looking place I had ever seen.

From these great caverns, of the time of Catherine II., we proceeded to the deepest part of the mine by descending a shaft cut through the solid rock at an angle of about forty-five degrees and not provided with ladders. A heavy and rusty chain had been festooned against one side by means of staples driven into holes drilled in the rock, and clinging to this chain we cautiously descended the shaft, with a stream of water running ankle-deep around our legs and tumbling in cascades into the depths of the mine. On the lowest level that we reached, a party of convicts was at work blasting out a new gallery with dynamite. A perpendicular climb of 300 or 400 feet up slippery ladders in another shaft brought us once more to the surface, and when, wet, muddy, and breathless, I stepped from the end of the last ladder upon the floor of the tool-house I was so exhausted that I could hardly stand on my feet.

After having visited and inspected the gloomy mine and the wretched, dilapidated log prison of Kadáiya, Mr. Frost and I proceeded across an apparently interminable series of bare, snowy mountain ridges to the mining settlement of Górní Zerentúi, which is situated in a wide, treeless valley

about forty miles north of the Kadański mine, and thirty miles from the boundary line between Eastern Siberia and Mongolia. We reached our destination at a late hour in the night, awakened the inmates of the *zémski kvartír*, or



GÓRNI ZERENTÚL.

official lodging-house, warmed and refreshed ourselves with tea, and lay down to sleep, as usual, on the hard, vermin-infested plank floor of the travelers' room. Monday morning we called upon Captain Demídof, the commanding officer of the post, and, at our request, were conducted at once to the prison. It consisted of two old, weather-beaten log buildings of the common East-Siberian type, and pre-

sented nothing that was either new or interesting. One hundred and eighty convicts were confined in the two buildings, and about as many more, who had finished their terms of probation, were living outside in the free command. A new three-story brick prison was in process of erection a short distance away, but work upon it had apparently been suspended or abandoned. It was already ten years old, and in view of the corrupt, shiftless, and inefficient management of prison affairs throughout Eastern Siberia, it seemed to me altogether likely that work upon it would drag along for five or six years more. At the time of our visit the structure had neither floors nor roof, and was still surrounded with scaffolding. Meanwhile 180 idle convicts were being slowly poisoned to death by bad air in the overcrowded *kámeras* of the log prison that the brick building was intended to replace.<sup>1</sup>

It is hard for an American to understand or make allowances for the shiftlessness, indifference, and inefficiency that are everywhere manifested throughout the Nérechinsk silver-mining district. The mines themselves are not half worked; hundreds of hard-labor convicts lie idle, month

<sup>1</sup> Upon my return to St. Petersburg in the spring of the following year, I had an interview with Mr. Gálkine Wrásskoy, the chief of the Russian prison administration, in the course of which I ventured to call his attention to the condition of the prisons in the Nérechinsk silver-mining district, and to the unfinished prison at Górní Zerentúí in particular. He admitted that the necessity for new places of confinement at the Nérechinsk mines was evident as early as 1872, and said that in 1874 a special construction committee was appointed to investigate, report, and submit plans. When he [Gálkine Wrásskoy] made a tour of inspection through Siberia in 1881—seven years later—he found that this specially appointed committee had spent 74,318 *rúbles* in the erection of two or three small log buildings and in temporary

repairs to a few others, had pocketed 61,090 *rúbles* for salaries and expenses, and had not furnished to the prison administration a single plan or estimate. (These facts were set forth in the annual report of the prison administration for 1882, pp. 72, 73.)

"Well," I said, "what was done in view of this state of affairs?"

"I recommended," he replied, "that the construction committee be abolished."

"And was it abolished?"

"It was."

"I did not see anything at the Nérechinsk mines," I said, "to show for the 74,000 *rúbles* that the committee is supposed to have expended, except one small log prison that appeared to be new at the mine of Pokrófski and the unfinished brick building at Górní Zerentúí. Why has the latter been so

after month, in dirty, overcrowded cells; plans and estimates for new buildings go back and forth, year after year, between the mines and St. Petersburg; and when, at last, a prison like that at Górní Zerentúí is authorized, work upon it drags along, in a lazy, shiftless fashion, for a whole decade, without the least apparent reason. I said one day to the resident mining-engineer at the Kutomárski Zavód, "Why don't you provide yourself with suitable iron machinery, furnish your laborers with improved modern tools, set up steam-pumping, hoisting, and ventilating apparatus, and work your mines as they ought to be worked? What is the use of pottering along in the way you do?"

"My dear sir," he replied, "do you know what iron costs here? We have to bring it with horses from Petrófski Zavód, a distance of more than 600 *versts*, and it costs, delivered here, 5½ *rúbles* a *pud* [about 7½ cents a pound]. We can't afford to put in iron machinery."

"But," I said, "is n't there iron ore in this vicinity?"

"Yes," he replied; "but it has never been gotten out."

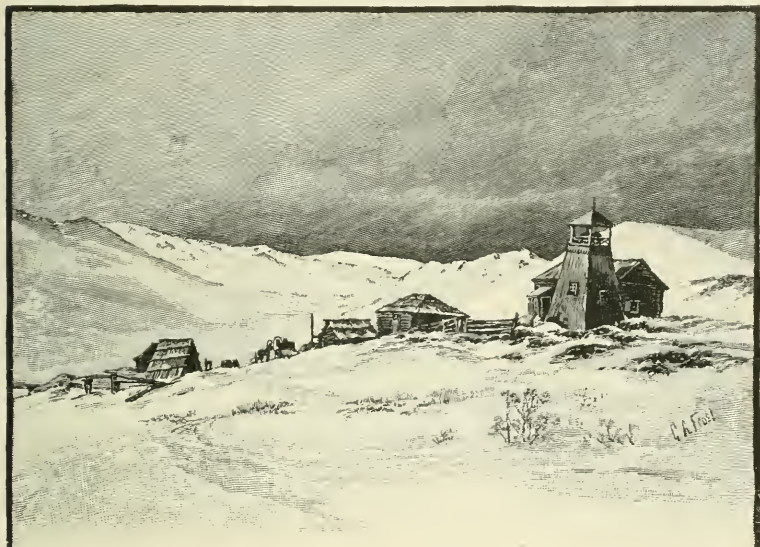
long—ten years—in process of erection?"

"The delay has been due in part," he replied, "to repeated changes of plan. The building ought not to have been made of brick, in the first place. Careful estimates show that a brick prison for 300 convicts will cost at the mines about 160,000 *rúbles*, while a good log prison, to accommodate the same number of men, can be built for 52,000 *rúbles*. A brick prison has no advantage over a wooden one in point of permanency, because when the mine near which it stands has been worked out, the building must, of necessity, be abandoned; and it is less wasteful, of course, to abandon a log prison than one made of brick. The prison at Górní Zerentúí, however, was so far advanced when I assumed the direction of the prison department that it hardly seemed worth while to suspend work upon it and begin another."

Neither Mr. Gálkine Wrásskoy nor his assistant, Mr. Kokóftsef, gave me any satisfactory explanation of the delays, mistakes, and bad management generally that seemed to me to characterize the administration of prison affairs in the mining district of the Trans-Baikál. They were doing, they said, all that they could do to improve the situation; but they had inherited most of the existing evils from their official predecessors, and time enough had not elapsed for complete and sweeping reforms. It is possible that I did not fully appreciate the difficulties and embarrassments with which they had to contend; but it seemed to me that many, if not most, of the evils of the exile system in general, and of the prison administration in particular, were the result of indifference, inefficiency, and a complicated bureaucratic method of transacting public business.



“Why don’t you get it out, set up smelting-furnaces, and make your iron here on the ground where you need it? More than half of your convicts lie constantly idle in their cells—why don’t you utilize their labor?”



THE SÁVENSKI MINE.

“We can’t open an iron mine,” he replied, “without a *razreshénia* [a permit or an authorization] from St. Petersburg.”

“Then why don’t the proper authorities give you a *razreshénia*? What is the reason that a useful and necessary work of this kind cannot be accomplished? I don’t see how the present state of affairs can be profitable to anybody.”

His only reply was a shrug of the shoulders, which I interpreted to mean either that he did not know or that it was not his business.

From the prisons of Górní Zerentúi we drove in Captain Demídoſ’s *dróshky* to the Sávenski mine, which we found on a snowy, desolate mountain slope about two miles from the village. The buildings at the mouth of the shaft were

cheap and insignificant, as usual, but one of them contained a small steam-engine—the first and only machine of the kind that I saw in the Trans-Baikál. While Mr. Frost was making a sketch of the building and of the dreary arctic landscape, I went through the mine, but found little to reward me for the labor of climbing up and down the icy ladders. The shaft was less than a hundred feet in depth; the galleries were so low that I could not anywhere stand upright; the atmosphere was damp and chilly; and the roofs and walls were thickly incrustated with frost or ice. Only thirty-five convicts were at work in the mine, and most of them seemed to be engaged in carrying ore in small wicker baskets to the hoisting shaft, emptying it into square wooden buckets holding about a bushel each, and then raising it to the surface, a bucketful at a time, by means of a clumsy old wooden windlass. I doubted whether methods more primitive were employed even by the aborigines who worked these silver veins three centuries earlier. Certainly none more primitive had ever come under my observation. I said to the *ustávshchik*, or overseer, who conducted me through the mine, “Why don’t you set more men at work here? I have just come from the prison, where I found at least 150 convicts idle.”

“We have n’t room for more than thirty-five or forty men in the galleries,” he replied soberly.

“But you can extend the mine, can you not?” I inquired. “Fifty or a hundred more laborers could soon make room for themselves by digging and blasting. If the ore is there, why not extend your operations and get it out as rapidly as possible? You ought to widen and heighten your galleries, lay down tramways in them, improve your hoisting apparatus, employ horse power, and work on a larger scale.”

The *ustávshchik* made no reply, but looked at me in a surprised way, as if he regarded my ideas as utterly wild and impracticable.

The number of hard-labor convicts in the Nérchinsk silver-mining district at the time of our visit was approxi-

mately 952, distributed as follows: at the Alexandrófski Zavód, 188; at the mine of Algachí, 150; at the Pokrófski mine, 70; at the Kadaínski and Smírnovo mines, 184; and at the Sávenski and Górní Zerentúiefski mines, 360. Probably not more than one-third of these men, and certainly not more than half of them, were actually engaged in hard labor. The rest lived, month after month, in enforced idleness, notwithstanding the amount of work that there was everywhere to be done. The only reasons I could get for this state of affairs were, first, that room could not be found for the idle men in the mines; secondly, that the convoys of soldiers were not strong enough to guard large parties of convicts on the roads or in the forests; thirdly, that it would cost more to erect new prisons with convict labor and under official supervision than to have them built by contract;<sup>1</sup> and fourthly, that the convicts could not be set to work in any of the ways that I suggested without a *razreshénia*, or authorization, from St. Petersburg. None of these reasons had, to my mind, the least force or validity. The idleness of the convicts, and the failure of the authorities to do any one of the scores of things that needed doing, were the direct result, it seemed to me, of official indifference, incapacity, or lack of enterprise. An energetic American with plenary powers and a capital of \$10,000 or \$15,000 would take the 950 convicts imprisoned in the Nérchinsk silver-mining district, and in less than two years would have a new prison built at every mine in

<sup>1</sup> This reason was based on the admitted incompetence and dishonesty of the local officials under whose supervision the work would have to be done. There are cases on record in which the local Siberian authorities embezzled the whole of the sum appropriated for the erection of a Government building and reported such building as completed and occupied when even its foundations had not been laid. Such a case—that of the Ukírski *étape*—is cited in the Vérkhni Údinsk corre-

spondence of the St. Petersburg *Eastern Review*, No. 2, January 12, 1884, p. 8. A well-known photographer in Siberia showed me a photograph of a new Government building which he had just taken, he said, upon an order from St. Petersburg, and which he was about to send to the higher authorities in that city as a proof that the structure, which had been ordered and paid for, was really in existence and had been built in accordance with the plans.

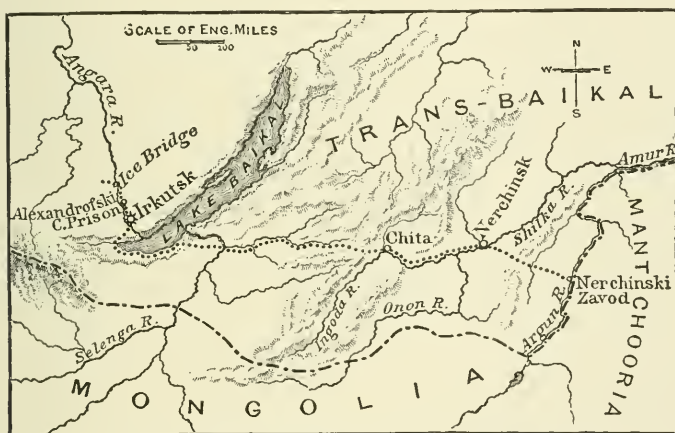
the whole region, and in less than five years would double, if not quadruple, the productive capacity of the mines themselves, without calling upon the imperial treasury for a single dollar in the shape of extraordinary expenditure. Such, at least, was the opinion that I formed on the ground, after as careful an examination as I could make of the working methods of the local officials.



## CHAPTER X

### ADVENTURES IN EASTERN SIBERIA

THE Sávenski mine was the last one that we visited in Eastern Siberia. Monday afternoon, November 23d, we drove to the Nérchinski Zavód, or Nérchinsk Works, a large village about ten miles from Górní Zerentúi, and Tuesday morning we set out on our return journey to the Shílka River and the town of Nérchinsk, distant about two hundred



OUR ROUTE FROM NÉRCHINSKI ZAVÓD TO THE ANGARÁ.

miles. It is not necessary to describe in detail our long, tedious, and exhausting ride. The country through which we passed was a dreary desert of low, rolling mountains, thinly covered with snow; the thermometer ranged constantly from zero to twenty-seven degrees below; the roads

were generally rough, hard-frozen, and bare; the *telégas* and *tárantásas* furnished us were the worst and most uncomfortable vehicles of their kind in all Eastern Siberia; and we suffered from cold, hunger, jolting, and sleeplessness until we were reduced to a state of silent, moody, half-savage exasperation, in which life—or at least *such* a life—seemed no longer worth living, and we were ready to barter all our earthly rights and possessions for a hot bath, a good dinner, and twelve hours of unbroken sleep in a warm, clean bed.

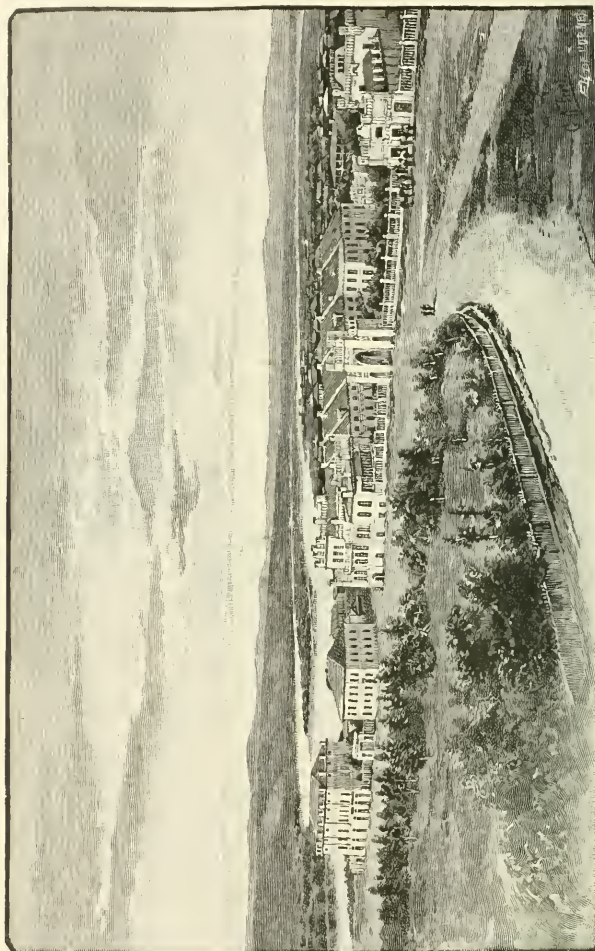
At four o'clock Thursday morning, a little more than forty hours after leaving the Nérchinski Zavód, we reached the post-station of Biankínskaya, on the bank of the Shílka River, and, transferring our baggage for the first time from a wheeled vehicle to a sledge, we continued our journey to Nérchinsk over the ice in a temperature of twenty degrees below zero. We had had for several days very little to eat, and in the absence of nourishing food the intense cold forced me to put on, one over another, no less than three heavy sheepskin *shúbas*, which extended from my neck to my heels and transformed me into a huge perambulating cotton bale surmounted by a fur cap and a dirty, unshaven, frost-bitten face. Even under all my furs I was cold to the very marrow of my bones; and Mr. Frost, who had only two warm coats and wore only one, suffered much more than I did. When we reached Nérchinsk, late that forenoon, we found that there was no snow in the streets, and as our underfed and feeble horses could not drag us over bare ground, we alighted from our sledge and waddled ingloriously behind it into the city, like stiff-jointed arctic mummies marching after the hearse in a funeral procession.

At Nérchinsk, for the first time in a month, we stopped in a hotel; but in point of cleanliness and comfort it was far inferior to the *zémski kvartírs* in which we had slept at the mines. It was, in fact, the very worst hotel that we had seen in Siberia. The main hall, which divided the one-

story log building into halves, was dark and dirty, and had been fitted up with shelves in order that it might serve also as a butler's pantry; the room to which we were shown was chilly and bare, and its stale, heavy atmosphere was pervaded by a faint odor of *ugár*, or charcoal gas; half of the paper had fallen or been torn from the walls and was hanging here and there in ragged strips; yellow, dirt-incrusted paint was peeling in flakes from window-sashes and casings that apparently had never been dusted or washed; the rough, uncovered plank floor was not only dirty, but had sunk unevenly in places and was full of rat-holes; cockroaches were running briskly over the tea-stained, crumb-besprinkled cotton cloth that covered the only table in the room; there was no bed upon which the tired wayfarer might repose, nor mirror in which he might have the melancholy satisfaction of surveying his frost-bitten countenance. The only servant in the establishment was a half-grown boy in top-boots and a red flannel shirt; and the greenish-yellow brass pan that he brought us to wash our hands and faces over had evidently been used habitually for another and a much more ignoble purpose, and had never been rinsed or cleaned. Tired, cold, and hungry, and accustomed as we were to dirt, disorder, and discomfort, we regarded this cheerless, neglected hotel with dismay; but it was the only one that the place afforded, and we were compelled to make the best of it. The proprietor was an exiled Pole named Klementóvich, and I could not help thinking that if he kept in Poland such a hotel as he maintained in Nérchinsk, there were reasons enough, based upon sound public policy and a due regard for the general welfare, to justify his banishment by administrative process to the most remote part of Siberia, regardless of his political opinions. After a breakfast of tea, sour rye-bread, and greasy pancakes, we set our dress to rights as well as we could before a diminutive mirror that the proprietor finally brought us, and walked out

to take a look at the town and deliver one or two letters of introduction.

The town of Nérchinsk, which has about 4000 inhabitants, is situated on the left bank of the Nércha River, two or



BÚTIN'S HOUSE AT NÉRCHINSK.

three miles above the junction of the latter with the Shílka, and about 4600 miles east of St. Petersburg. In point of culture and material prosperity it seemed to me to compare favorably with most East-Siberian towns of its class. It



has a bank, two or three schools, a hospital with twenty beds, a library, a museum, a public garden with a fountain, and fifty or sixty shops, and its trade in furs and manufactured goods from European Russia amounts to about \$1,000,000 per annum. The most striking feature of the town to a new-comer is the almost palatial residence of the wealthy mining proprietor Bútin, which would compare favorably not only with any house in Siberia, but with most houses in the capital of the Empire. The Bútin brothers were in financial difficulties at the time of our visit to Nérechinsk, and all of their property was in the hands of a receiver; but we had a note of introduction to the latter from the younger member of the firm, and upon presentation of it we were allowed to inspect the deserted but still beautiful mansion. Going into it from Klementóvich's hotel was like going into Aladdin's palace from an East-Siberian *étape*; and as I entered the splendid ball-room, and caught the full-length reflection of my figure in the largest mirror in the world,<sup>1</sup> I felt like rubbing my eyes to make sure that I was awake. One does not expect to find in the wilds of Eastern Siberia, nearly 5000 miles from St. Petersburg, a superb private residence with hardwood marquetry floors, silken curtains, hangings of delicate tapestry, stained-glass windows, splendid chandeliers, soft Oriental rugs, white-and-gold furniture upholstered with satin, old Flemish paintings, marble statues, family portraits from the skilful brush of Makófski, and an extensive conservatory filled with palms, lemon-trees, and rare orchids from the tropics. Such luxury would excite no remark in a wealthy and populous European city; but in the snowy wilderness of the Trans-Baikál, 3000 miles from the boundary-line of Europe, it comes to the unprepared

<sup>1</sup> This huge pier-glass was bought by Mr. Bútin at the Paris Exposition in 1878, and was then said to be the largest mirror in existence. It was taken half around the world by sea to the East-Siberian port of Nikoláievsk, and was thence transported up the rivers

Amúr and Shílka to Nérechinsk in a barge made expressly for the purpose. It is now in the ball-room of Mr. Bútin's house, and does not look at all out of place or out of harmony with its surroundings.

traveler with the shock of a complete surprise. The house had not been occupied for several months, and of course did not appear at its best; but it seemed to me that I had rarely seen more evidences of wealth, refinement, and cultivated taste than were to be found within its walls. The ball-room, which was the largest room in the house, was about sixty-five feet in length by forty-five in width, and over it, in a large semicircular gallery reached by a grand stairway, there was an orchestrion, as big as a church organ, which played sixty or seventy airs and furnished music for the entertainments that the Bútins, in the days of their prosperity, were accustomed to give to the people of the town. The library, which was another spacious apartment, was filled with well-selected books, newspapers, and magazines, in three or four languages, and contained also a large collection of Siberian minerals and ores. Adjoining the house were the offices and shops where the Bútins carried on the various branches of their extensive and diversified business, and where they had accumulated the wealth that the house partly represented or embodied. In addition to gold-mining, they were engaged in trading, distilling, iron-manufacturing, and the construction of steamers, and their business operations extended to all parts of Eastern Siberia, and gave employment to many hundreds of men.

After thanking the receiver, Mr. Pomázkin, for his courtesy in going through the house with us, we returned to the hotel, and later in the afternoon called upon Messrs. Charúshin and Kuznetsóf, two political exiles who had served out terms of hard labor at the mines, and had then been sent as forced colonists to Nérchinsk, where they were living with their families in comparative comfort. We found them both to be intelligent, cultivated, and very companionable men, and during our three-days' stay in the town we passed with them many pleasant hours. They had had a very hard experience at the mines of Kará, but after their arrival at Nérchinsk they had been treated with reasonable

courtesy and consideration, and had even been permitted to engage in branches of business, such as teaching and photography, that by law are closed to political offenders. All of their correspondence was still "under control" —that is, subject to official supervision and censorship — but they were not constantly watched, regulated, and harassed by the police, as political exiles are in so many other parts of Siberia, and it seemed to me that their life, although hard and lonely, was perfectly tolerable. Mr. Charúshin, before his banishment, spent four years and a half in solitary confinement, and for two years and a half lay in one of the bomb-proof casemates of the Petropávlovski fortress. His offense was carrying on a revolutionary propaganda among the factory operatives in one of the suburbs of St. Petersburg. When he was finally sent to Siberia, in 1878, his wife voluntarily accompanied him, and at the mines of Kará she lived alone in a wretched little cabin at the Lower Diggings until, upon the expiration of his term of probation, Mr. Charúshin was permitted to join her. He was one of the nine political convicts of the free command sent back to prison by order of Loris-Mélikof on the 1st of January, 1881, and it was in his house that poor Eugene Semyónofski committed suicide on the eve of that day.

Sunday morning, November 29th, after bidding good-by with sincere regret to Mr. and Mrs. Charúshin, whose warm hearts and lovable characters had won our affection and esteem, we left Nérechinsk in a sleigh for Chíta, the capital of the Trans-Baikál.

The icicles that hung from the nostrils of our frost-whitened horses, the sharp metallic creaking of the crisp snow under our sledge-runners, the bluish, opalescent tints of the distant mountains, and the high, slender columns of smoke that stood, without waver or tremble, over the chimneys of the houses were all evidences of a very low, if not an arctic, temperature; and I was not surprised, when I looked at our thermometer, to find the mercury stationary

at twenty-seven degrees below zero. As night came on, the intensity of the cold increased until it was all that we could do to endure it from one post-station to another. We drank three or four tumblers of hot tea every time we stopped to change horses; but in the long, lonely hours between midnight and morning, when we could get no warm food and when all our vital powers were usually at their lowest ebb, we suffered very severely. We had no difficulty in getting post-horses until just before dark Monday evening, when we reached the station of Turinopovorótnaya, about fifty miles from Chíta, and found the whole village in a state of hilarious intoxication. Sleighs filled with young men and boys were careering hither and thither with wild whoops and halloos; long lines of peasant girls in brightly-colored calico dresses were unsteadily promenading back and forth in the streets with their arms around one another and singing *khórovód* songs; the station-house was filled with flushed and excited people from neighboring settlements, who had evidently been participating in a celebration of some kind and were about starting for their homes; the station-master, who perhaps had not finished his celebration, was nowhere to be found; there was not a driver about the stables; and the *stárosta*,<sup>1</sup> a short, fat old man, who looked like a burgher from Amsterdam, was so drunk that even with the aid of a cane he could hardly stand on his feet. In vain we tried to ascertain the reasons for this surprising epidemic of inebriation. Nobody was sober enough to explain to us what had happened. From the excited and more or less incoherent conversation of the intoxicated travelers in the station-house, I learned that even the village priest was so drunk that he had to be taken home in a sleigh by the soberest of his parishioners. If the station-master, the *stárosta*, the village priest, the drivers, and all of the inhabitants were drunk, there was evidently no prospect of our being able to get horses. In fact we

<sup>1</sup> A *stárosta*, or elder, is the head of a Siberian village.



could not find anybody who seemed sober enough to know the difference between a horse and his harness. We therefore brought our baggage into the crowded station-house, and sat down in an unoccupied corner to study intoxicated humanity and await further developments. Every person in the house was drunk, except ourselves and one small baby in arms. The father of this baby, a good-looking young Russian officer in full uniform, wandered unsteadily about the room, animated apparently by a hazy idea that he ought to be collecting his scattered baggage so as to be in readiness for a start; but the things that he picked up in one place he dropped feebly in another, and every minute or two he would suspend operations to exchange with his intoxicated companions fragmentary reminiscences of the day's festivity. Finally he seemed to be struck by a happy thought, and, making his way in a devious course to one corner of the room, he took up his saber, which was leaning against the wall, and, carrying it to his intoxicated wife, committed it solemnly to her care with directions to take it out to the sleigh. She was sober enough to remark, with some asperity, that as she had a young baby in her arms, and as the temperature out-of-doors was twenty degrees below zero, he had better take the saber to the sleigh himself. At this he clasped the sheathed weapon dramatically to his breast, rolled his eyes in a fine frenzy upward, and declared with emotion that the saber was his first bride, that he never would forsake it, and that, in view of all the circumstances, he *would* take it out to the sleigh himself. A moment later, however, he dropped it, and but for the supervision of his second bride would have forgotten it altogether.

About eight o'clock, after watching for an hour or two such performances as these, I succeeded in capturing the *stárosta*, and addressing to him some very energetic remarks I sobered him sufficiently to make him understand that we must have horses at once or there would be trouble.

While I stood over him with a verbal club, he entered us in the station-house book as "Mr. Kennan and companion, citizens of Neighboring States";<sup>1</sup> and then going out on the front steps he shouted, as every sleigh-load of drunken men went past, "Andréi! Nikolái! Loshedéi sei chas!" [Horses, this moment!] The only replies that he received were wild howls of derision. At every such outburst of hilarious contempt for authority, he would raise his shaking hands as high as his head with a feeble and comical gesture of helplessness and despair, and exclaim in maudlin tones: "Fsei pyánni! Shto prikázhtie dyélat? Chisto nakazánia!" [They're all drunk! What are you going to do about it? It's a regular punishment!]

About nine o'clock the noise, tumult, and shouting in the village streets began to subside; the station-master, whose intoxication had taken the form of severe official dignity, suddenly appeared, and in a tone of stern menace wanted to know where the post-drivers were and what all this disorder meant; the young Russian officer, who by this time had reached the affectionate stage of inebriation, kissed all the women in the room, crossed himself devoutly, and meandered out to the sleigh, followed by his wife with the baby and the saber; two intoxicated priests in long gowns, and high, cylindrical, brimless hats draped with black crape, alighted from a *dróshky* in front of the door, allowed their hands to be reverently kissed by the inebriated young officer and his friends, and then rode off in a post-sleigh driven by a peasant who could hardly keep his seat on the box; and finally, when we had almost abandoned the hope of ever getting away, a really sober man in a ragged sheepskin coat emerged from the darkness and reported in a business-like manner to the station-master that the horses were ready for us. The drunken and irate official, who seemed desirous of vindicating his dignity and authority in some way, over-

<sup>1</sup> The Russian words for "neighboring" and "united" bear a superficial resemblance to each other, and the poor intoxicated *stárostá* had never heard, evidently, of such a country as the United States.

whelmed the unfortunate driver with abuse, and ended by fining him fifty *kopéks*—whether for being sober or for having the horses ready, I do not know. We piled our baggage into the sleigh, climbed in upon it, and rode out of the intoxicated settlement with thankful hearts. As the last faint sounds of revelry died away in the distance behind us, I said to the driver: “What ’s the matter with everybody in this village? The whole population seems to be drunk.”

“They ’ve been consecrating a new church,” said the driver, soberly.

“Consecrating a church!” I exclaimed in amazement. “Is that the way you consecrate churches?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Sometimes they drink. After the services they had a *guláinia* [a sort of holiday promenade with music and spirituous refreshments], and some of them crooked their elbows too often.”

“*Some* of them!” I repeated. “*All* of them, you mean. You ’re the only sober man I ’ve seen in the place. How does it happen that you ’re not drunk?”

“I ’m not a Christian,” he replied, with quiet simplicity. “I ’m a Buriát.”<sup>1</sup>

As a Christian—if not a member of the Holy Orthodox Church—I was silenced by the unconscious irony of the reply. The only sober man in a village of three or four hundred inhabitants proved to be a pagan, and he had just been fined fifty *kopéks* by a Christian official for not getting drunk with other good citizens, and thus showing his respect for the newly consecrated edifice and his appreciation of the benign influence of the Holy Orthodox Faith!

About ten o’clock on the morning of Tuesday, December 1st, we drove into the town of Chíta, and took up our quarters in a small, one-story log hotel kept by a man named Biáchinski and known as the “Hotel Vládívostók.” There was in Chíta, as I have said in a previous chapter, a tolerably

<sup>1</sup> The natives in Siberia known as Buriáts are nearly all Lamaists.

large and very interesting colony of political exiles. We had made their acquaintance and had had some conversation with them on our outward journey; but as we were then making every effort to reach the mines of Kará before the setting in of winter, we could not spend as much time with them as we wished to spend, and we therefore decided to stop for ten days or two weeks in Chíta on our return. Most of these exiles were forced colonists who had already served out terms of hard labor at the mines and who belonged to the class that the Government regarded as particularly dangerous. In view of this fact, and of the official attention that our investigations had already attracted at Kará, it seemed to me necessary to proceed with more than ordinary caution and to cultivate the most friendly possible relations with the authorities. It was more than likely that Captain Nikólin, the gendarme commandant at the mines of Kará, had informed the acting-governor at Chíta of our surreptitious visits to the politicals of the free command; and, if so, it was quite probable that our later movements would be watched. What would be the result of a discovery that we were visiting the politicals in Chíta every day I did not know; but as we were still apprehensive of a police search it seemed prudent to take every possible precaution. I called at once upon Colonel Svec'hín, who was then acting as governor in the absence of General Barabásh, gave him a tolerably full account of our experience at the mines,—omitting, of course, the episode with the political convicts,—and outlined to him our plans for the future. He was very pleasant and courteous, asked no inconvenient questions, and when I bade him good day and bowed myself out of his reception-room I felt quite reassured. Either he was not aware of the extent of our intercourse with the political exiles in his province, or he regarded such intercourse with indifference as a matter of little consequence.

Two or three days after our arrival, a wealthy merchant of the town, named Némerof, whose acquaintance I had



made through a casual call at his place of business, invited us to go with him to an amateur theatrical entertainment to be given for some benevolent object in the small theater connected with the official club. Hoping to make a few useful acquaintances, and desirous, at the same time, of showing ourselves in public as much as possible with "trustworthy" people, we accepted the invitation. Between the acts of the rather clever and creditable performance we promenaded in one of the lobbies, made the acquaintance of a number of civil and military officials, received a pleasant greeting from the acting-governor, and attracted general attention as "distinguished Americans," well known to the higher authorities of the place and upon friendly terms even with the acting-governor and chief of staff. No one, we hoped, would suspect that these distinguished foreigners had stopped in Chita for the express purpose of extending their acquaintance with political convicts, nihilists, and terrorists.

Among the army officers to whom I was introduced between the acts was a certain Colonel Nóvikof, who, accompanied by several other officers in full uniform, was walking back and forth in the lobby. As soon as he caught my name he looked at me curiously, and, without any preliminary leading up to the subject, said, "I hear that you have been at the mines of Kará."

"Yes," I replied, with some surprise and uneasiness; "I have just come from there."

"What did you find good there?" he inquired, looking sharply into my face.

I hardly knew what reply to make to such a question as this; but I thought that it would be safe at least to speak well of the officials, so far as I could conscientiously do so, and I therefore replied promptly that I found a good man, namely, Major Pótulof.

"Humph!" grunted the colonel, contemptuously. "I suppose he showed you everything in the most favorable light."

"There are some things that cannot be shown in a very

favorable light," I replied, feeling more and more uneasiness, but determined to take the bull by the horns.

"Did you go through the prisons?" he demanded.

"Yes," I said, "we saw most of them."

"Did they show you the 'naked command'?"

"No; I don't even know what you mean by the 'naked command.'"

"I mean a cell full of prisoners without clothing. When I first went to Kará and made a visit of inspection to the prisons, I found a *kámara* in which there were twenty-five convicts stark naked. This body of men was then known as the 'naked command.'"

"What was the explanation of it?" I inquired.

"I don't know," replied the officer with a shrug. "They simply had n't any clothes to wear.<sup>1</sup> Did your *good man* [a contemptuous reference to Major Pótulof] show you the solitary-confinement cells in the Middle Kará prison?"

"He did not," I replied. "What is there remarkable about them?"

"Oh, nothing," said the colonel, with assumed indifference, "except that they are not high enough to stand up in nor long enough to lie down in. You evidently did n't see anything except what they wanted you to see. I wish that I had been there; I would have shown you things as they *are*, not as your *liubéznoi khozáin* [amiable host] showed them to you."

By this time I was in a state of some bewilderment and perplexity. Could Colonel Nóvikof be sincere? Or was he merely laying a trap for me in order to ascertain what I

<sup>1</sup> I subsequently learned that the "naked command" was composed of convicts who made a regular practice of selling the clothing furnished them by the Government, in order to get money with which to gamble and buy liquor. As a punishment for this offense they had been shut up together in a large cell and deprived of clothing altogether. Of course the prisoners

could not have disposed of their garments and bought liquor with the proceeds unless they had been aided in so doing by the prison officials. The existence of a naked command, therefore, showed the corruptibility, rather than the cruelty, of the prison administration. Colonel Nóvikof seemed desirous of giving me a contrary impression.

really thought of the Kará prisons and the prison administration? I hardly dared say anything, for fear of making a mistake. Without waiting, however, for any remarks from me, Colonel Nóvikof said, "I lived at Kará as commander of the Cossack battalion for three years and a half; and when I was finally relieved from duty there, a few months ago, I was so glad that I had a special thanksgiving service read in the church.

"Do you see my beard?" he demanded abruptly after a moment's pause. "It is all sprinkled with gray, is n't it? That 's the result of the human misery that I was compelled to witness at the mines. When I went there, there was n't a white hair in it. How old do you think I am?"

I replied that I should take him to be about fifty-five.

"I am only forty-five," he said bitterly; "and when I went to Kará I was as young-looking a man as you are."

He paused for a moment, as if in gloomy retrospection, and I ventured to ask him what was the nature of the misery to which he referred.

"Misery of all kinds," he replied. "The wretched convicts are cruelly treated, flogged with rods and the *plet* [a sort of heavy cat], and worked for the benefit of their overseers, who enrich themselves at the convicts' expense. As for the suffering and injustice, I will give you an instance of it. While I was there the wife of the warden of one of the prisons accidentally discovered that her lover—a convict of the free command—was carrying on an intrigue with one of her servants, a good-looking girl belonging also to the criminal class. Enraged by jealousy, she made such representations to her husband the warden as to induce him to have the servant-girl flogged. The girl received 150 blows with the stick on her bare body, and then when she went to the *zavéduyushchi* [the governor of the penal establishment] and complained of the cruel treatment to which she had been subjected, she got ninety blows more with the *plet*,—240 blows in all,—and I stood by and saw

those executions carried out. Do you think that 's a pleasant thing? I have n't much hair left [stroking the top of his head], but all that I have has stood on end at the sights I have been forced to witness at those accursed mines. To see what one must see there one ought to have nerves of iron wire."<sup>1</sup>

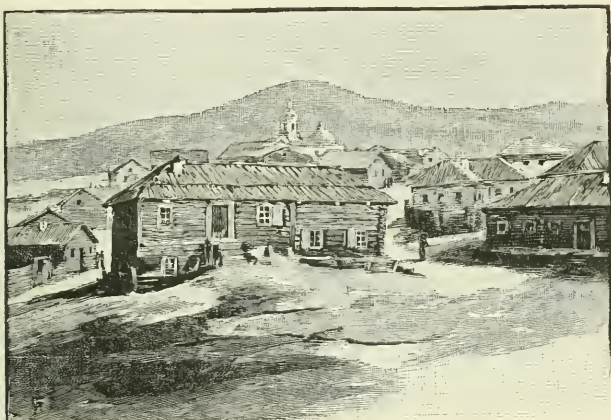
The reader must not suppose that these extraordinary statements were made to me quietly and confidentially in a corner. We were walking back and forth in the crowded lobby of a theater with three or four other officers, and Colonel Nóvikof talked excitedly and loudly enough to be heard not only by them, but by any one who cared to listen. It may seem strange that a Cossack officer of Colonel Nóvikof's prominence should make, voluntarily, to a stranger and foreigner, such damaging admissions with regard to the working of the Russian penal system; but this was not the only time that I was surprised and puzzled by such frankness. At a later hour that same evening another officer came to me between the acts, introduced himself, and began to question me about our experience at the mines of Kará. In less than five minutes he made the same inquiry that Colonel Nóvikof had made, viz: whether we had seen the solitary-confinement cells in the Middle Kará prison. I replied as before in the negative, whereupon he gave me the same information with regard to their dimensions that I had already received, and added that these horrible cells

<sup>1</sup> I think I quote Colonel Nóvikof's words with almost perfect accuracy. They made upon me, of course, a very deep impression, and I wrote them down in my note-book as soon as I returned from the theater. Some allowance must be made, however, for personal animus on the part of the speaker. His relations with other officers at the mines, and particularly with Major Pótulof, had evidently been unpleasant, if not hostile, and he may have exaggerated, or thrown into undue prominence, evils for which they

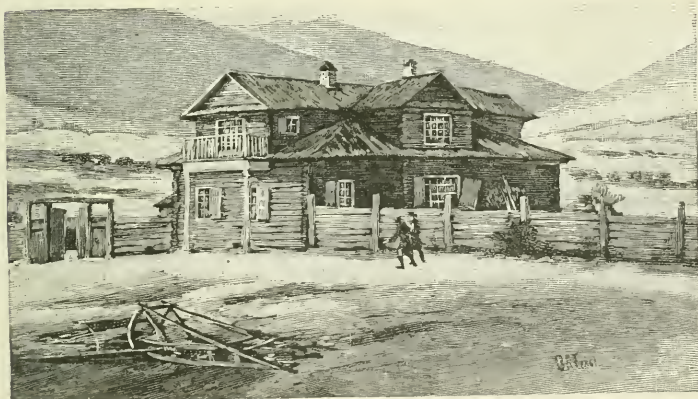
were responsible. The remarks that I have quoted are, nevertheless, interesting and significant as coming from an officer of high rank who had the best possible means of knowing the truth, and I give them for what they may be worth. Colonel Nóvikof is the same officer who told me that he would punish political offenders with the *shpitz-ruten*—a barbarous running of the gantlet, in the course of which the sufferer receives from two thousand to seven thousand blows from light rods.



had been used as places of confinement for political offenders, and even for cultivated women. Madam Róssikova, he said, had languished in one of those dungeons until the prison surgeon had pronounced her dying. He invited me



HOUSE OF DECEMBRIST EXILES.



THE POLITICAL EXILES' CARPENTER-SHOP, CHÍTA.

to call upon him, and said that if I was interested in prisons and the exile system he thought he could furnish me with some material. I am not at liberty to name this officer, nor to indicate the position that he held; but I can say, with-

out breach of confidence, that I did call upon him, and that I am indebted to him for many of the facts set forth in the four preceding chapters. He confirmed most of the statements made to me by the political convicts at Kará, gave me an account of the shooting of Governor Ilyashévich that did not differ in any essential respect from the narrative of Madam Kutitónskaya herself, and permitted me to see official documents of the utmost interest and value. If he had in view any other object than the establishment of the truth, I do not know what it was.

During our stay of nearly two weeks in Chíta I spent a large part of every day with "trustworthy" citizens and officials in order to avert suspicion, and then devoted the greater part of every night to the political convicts. We met the latter, as a rule, in a carpenter-shop maintained by some of them as a means of self-support in a large two-story log house once occupied by the famous Decembrist exiles of 1825. About nine o'clock every evening, ten or fifteen politicals would assemble in a spacious upper room over this carpenter-shop, and there, at a somewhat later hour, Mr. Frost and I would join them. Fanny Morénis, a bright and very pretty girl about twenty years of age, generally acted as hostess; Madam Géllis presided over the *samovár*; and by half-past ten o'clock every evening we were all grouped about a big table on one side of the room, smoking, drinking tea, relating our adventures, and discussing all sorts of social and political questions. Among the exiles in Chíta were some of the brightest, most cultivated, most sympathetic men and women that we had met in Eastern Siberia; and I still remember, with mingled feelings of pleasure and sadness, the hours that we spent with them. We were not always depressed and gloomy, nor did we always look on the dark penal side of Russian life. Sometimes Mr. Lázaref,<sup>1</sup> or Mr. Valúief, would take up an old battered guitar, and sing, to its accompaniment, a melo-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lázaref has since escaped from Siberia and is now in Milwaukee, Wis.

dious Russian romance; sometimes Mr. Frost and I gave the exiles a spirited if not a finished rendering of "Bingo," "The Bull-dog," "Solomon Levi," or some other rollicking college melody; and sometimes we all sang in chorus the

A MEETING OF THE POLITICAL EXILES IN CHINA.



stirring words and music of the "Little Russian Marseillaise," the quasi-revolutionary and prohibited song "On the Volga there is a Cliff," or the martial strains of "John Brown."

Sooner or later, however, we invariably reverted to the topics that most interested us all—the condition of Russia,



the Russian revolutionary movement, and the life of political exiles in prison, on the road, or at the mines. Here I obtained many of the facts that I have set forth in previous chapters, and here I heard, for the first time, the terrible history of the Kharkóf central prison, and the narrative of the desperate hunger-strike of the four women in the prison at Irkútsk.<sup>1</sup> Stories more ghastly and pathetic I had never read nor imagined; and night after night I went back to the hotel in a state of emotional excitement that made it impossible for me to sleep, and equally impossible to turn my thoughts into any other channel. All that I could do was to lie for hours on the floor, picturing to myself in imagination the scenes and events that had been described or related to me with such torturing vividness. It is one thing to read in cold, expressionless type such narratives of suffering, injustice, and bereavement as those that I have tried to reproduce in the preceding chapters; it is another and quite a different thing to hear them from the trembling lips of the men and women who have been actors in the tragedies described, and who have themselves gone down into the valley of the shadow of death. If, while listening to such stories, my eyes filled with tears and my hands were clenched in fierce though silent and helpless indignation, I am not ashamed of it—it would have been a relief to me sometimes if I could have cried.

The emotional strain of our East-Siberian experience was perhaps harder to bear than the mere physical suffering. One can endure cold, hunger, jolting, and fatigue with a certain philosophic cheerfulness; but emotional excitement—the constant appeal made by suffering to sympathy—exhausts nervous strength with great rapidity and eventually depresses all the vital powers. In our case there was not only the emotional strain, but the strain of constant anxiety and apprehension. We were liable, at almost any moment, to be arrested and searched; and what the conse-

<sup>1</sup> Mesdames Kaválskaya, Róssikova, Bogomólets, and Kutitónskaya.



quences of such a misfortune would be we could only conjecture. No attempt had yet been made to watch or follow us, so far as we were aware; but the room adjoining ours in the hotel was occupied by four officers, including a captain or colonel of gendarmes, and Mr. Frost thought that he had more than once heard, through the thin intervening partition, a conversation among these men with regard to the real object of our Siberian journey, and a discussion of methods by which our papers might be secured, or at least subjected to police inspection. One night, during our second week's stay in Chita, I came back to the hotel about two o'clock in the morning from a visit to the political exiles' carpenter-shop. There was not a sound nor a suggestion of life in the deserted streets of the little provincial town, the windows of the hotel were all dark, the servant who admitted me was only half awake, Mr. Frost was slumbering peacefully on a wooden bench in our room, and perfect stillness prevailed throughout the building. Apparently, everybody had been asleep for hours. The room occupied by the four officers was separated from ours only by a thin lath-and-paper wall through which there happened to be an intercommunicating door. Under this door was a vacant space of three or four inches, which, with the flimsiness of the partition, permitted sounds to pass from room to room with almost perfect freedom. Excited by the ghastly story of the murder of the political offender Sómof in the Odéssa prison, which I had just heard from one of the exiles, I could not sleep, and lighting a candle, I lay down on the floor with my head to the partition wall and tried to divert my thoughts by reading. For at least half an hour the only sound that came to my ears was Mr. Frost's soft, regular breathing. Suddenly the stillness, which was so profound as to be almost oppressive, was broken by the loud "Bang!" of a revolver almost opposite my head, on the other side of the partition. Surprised and startled, I raised myself on one elbow and listened. Nothing could be heard except a

faint rustle, made apparently by plaster-dust falling from the partition wall where the bullet had pierced it. Mr. Frost, roused from sound sleep, sat up and inquired, "What was that?"

"Somebody has just fired a revolver through our partition," I replied in a low tone.

"What time is it?"

"About half-past two. Keep quiet and listen."

With strained attention we waited fully two minutes without hearing the faintest sound. The hotel had become as still as before, and yet I knew that there were four men in the room from which the pistol-shot had come. If one of them had committed suicide—which was the first thought that flashed through my mind—why did not the others get up and strike a light? The report of the revolver was loud enough to rouse the whole hotel, and the perfect stillness that followed it was even more extraordinary and mysterious than the shot itself.

"Let's call to them and find out what the matter is," whispered Mr. Frost.

"No," I replied in an undertone; "let somebody else find out. We're not hurt."

I had great fear of becoming involved in some mystery or tragedy that would give the police an excuse for taking us into custody and overhauling our baggage or summoning us as witnesses, and it seemed to me best to "lie stiller than water and lower than grass," as the Russian peasants say, and await developments. Whatever might be the significance of the pistol-shot, it was none of our business unless the weapon had been aimed at us—and that seemed extremely improbable.

After the lapse of perhaps three minutes, I heard in the officers' room the clicking made by the cocking and uncocking of a revolver, followed in a few seconds by low whispering. Then one man in an undertone asked another how many more cartridges he had. Some inaudible reply was made,

after which there was whispering again for a moment or two, and finally silence. We did not hear another sound from the officers' room that night. Why that revolver-shot was fired through our partition from a perfectly dark and still room at half-past two o'clock in the morning we never ascertained. My own impression is that somebody desired to experiment upon us for fun; and if any one had questioned me about the incident on the following day, I should have said that pistol-shots in the night were so common in American hotels as to excite little or no remark, and that the only thing that surprised us was the absence of a dead body in the morning.

Whether or not the police discovered, during our stay in Chíta, that we were visiting the political convicts every day I have no means of knowing. That they became aware of it afterward I infer from the fact that the only letter I subsequently received from there, a perfectly innocent communication from the merchant Némerof, was delivered to me open—the end of the envelope having been cut off with a pair of scissors.

Up to the time of our arrival in Chíta I had carried the most important and compromising of my papers and documents in a leathern belt around my body; but they finally became so bulky and burdensome that it seemed necessary to make some other disposition of them, and in view of the possibility, if not the probability, of a police search, I determined to conceal them. The greater part of them I put into the hollow sides of a wooden box that I made for the purpose, and that was ostensibly intended to keep our dishes and tea-things in. Such a box I could carry from our sleigh to the house at every post-station without appearing to set any particular value upon it, and I could thus keep it constantly under my eye without exciting either the suspicion of the police or the cupidity of thieves. All travelers carried such boxes, and it was highly improbable that anybody would ever wonder what was in it. It explained

itself. The remainder of my documents, and a few letters from political exiles to their relatives in European Russia, I bound into the covers of books. As we were traveling with very little baggage, I had no books of my own; but the exiles in Chita furnished me with an English copy of "David Copperfield," a bound volume of a Russian magazine which contained an article upon the exile system, and an old book of logarithms.



SIBERIAN FREIGHT-SLEDGES.

We felt sure that "David Copperfield" and the logarithms would excite no suspicion, even if our baggage were overhauled, and we hoped that the article upon the exile system would carry the Russian magazine. Finally, I put one very important letter into a small square piece

of board, upon which was mounted an oil portrait of one of the Decembrist exiles of 1825. This portrait had been found in one of the houses of the Decembrists at Chita, and as I was a collector of curious and interesting relics, it was natural enough that I should be in possession of it. Altogether it seemed to me that my papers were very skillfully and successfully hidden. The police certainly could not find them without breaking or tearing to pieces nearly everything that I had.

Wednesday night, December 9th, we sang with the political exiles in Chita for the last time the plaintive but beautiful song of the Russian revolutionists, "On the Volga there is a Cliff," distributed among them as mementos all the trinkets and small articles of value that we had, and then, with



deep and sincere regret, bade them good-by forever. Twelve hours later we were posting furiously towards Irkútsk, the capital of Eastern Siberia. For five days and nights we traveled westward at the rate of eight miles an hour, stopping only to change horses, and suffering from cold, hunger, and sleeplessness until it seemed to me that I could endure no more. We found Lake Baikál still open, but the last steamer for the season had gone, and we were forced to take the high, picturesque cornice road around the lake at its southern end. Monday evening, December 14th, we were stopped only fifty or sixty miles from Irkútsk by the absence of post-horses. For almost three months we had been cut off from all communication with the civilized world, for ten weeks we had not received a letter nor read a newspaper, and furious with impatience at finding ourselves stopped so near the capital, we hired a peasant to carry us and our baggage on a low freight-sledge to the next station. We little knew what a night of misery we were preparing for ourselves. The cold was intense; the road ran across a series of high, massive, and densely wooded mountain-ridges; the peasant's horses proved to be half dead from starvation, and after the first three miles absolutely refused to draw us up hill; we walked almost the whole distance in a temperature of twenty degrees below zero, and finally reached the next station, more dead than alive, at two o'clock in the morning. If I fell down once I fell down twenty times from weakness and exhaustion on the slippery slopes of the last hills. Tuesday, December 15th, we reëntered the city of Irkútsk, drove to the post-office and then to the Moscow Hotel, and, without waiting to wash our hands, change our dress, or refresh ourselves with food, sat down to read forty or fifty letters from home. The most recent of them were two and a half months old, and the earliest in date nearly six.

It was late in the Siberian winter when we reached Irkútsk, and the thermometer had indicated temperatures

as low as thirty and thirty-five degrees below zero; but the Angará River was still open in the middle, and as there was no bridge, and the ferry-boats had ceased running, we could not get across. For more than three weeks

we waited impatiently for the rapid stream to close; but as it then showed no disposition to do so, we resolved to descend its right, or eastern, bank to a point about a hundred miles nearer the arctic ocean, where, according to the reports of



SIBERIAN PAVÓSKA OR TRAVELING-SLEIGH

the peasants, a gorge had occurred and an ice bridge had formed. On Friday, January 8th, having sold our old *tárantás* and purchased with the proceeds a comfortable

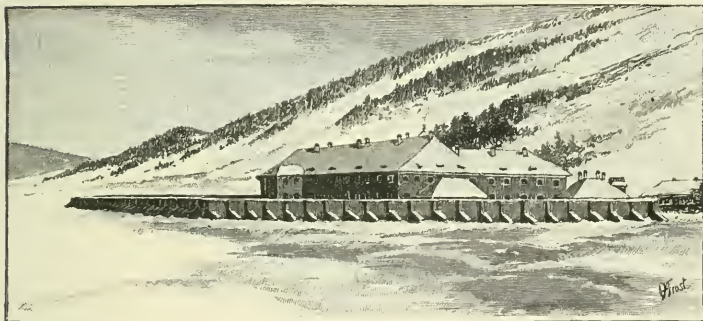
*pavóska*, or winter traveling-sleigh, like that shown in the illustration on this page, we sent to the post-station for a *tróika* of horses and set out by way of the Alexandrófski central prison for the ice bridge across the Angará.

The Alexandrófski central prison, which at the time of our visit had the reputation of being one of the best as well as one of the largest institutions of its kind in Eastern Siberia, is situated on the right bank of the Angará River about forty miles below Irkútsk, and was built and occupied for a time as a distillery. It was remodeled and turned into a prison in 1874, and since then has been used as a place of confinement and of nominal hard labor for about a thousand convicts. I was particularly anxious to see it, because Acting-governor Petróf in Irkútsk had described it to me as "almost a model prison," and I had not thus far seen any prisons in Siberia to which such a description

would apply. After a pleasant and comfortable ride of eight hours from Irkútsk we reached the prison settlement about half-past nine o'clock Friday night, drove at once



FRONT VIEW.



SIDE VIEW.

THE ALEXANDRÓFSKI CENTRAL PRISON.

to the post-station, and, having warmed ourselves with three or four tumblers of hot tea, went to bed on the floor, as usual.

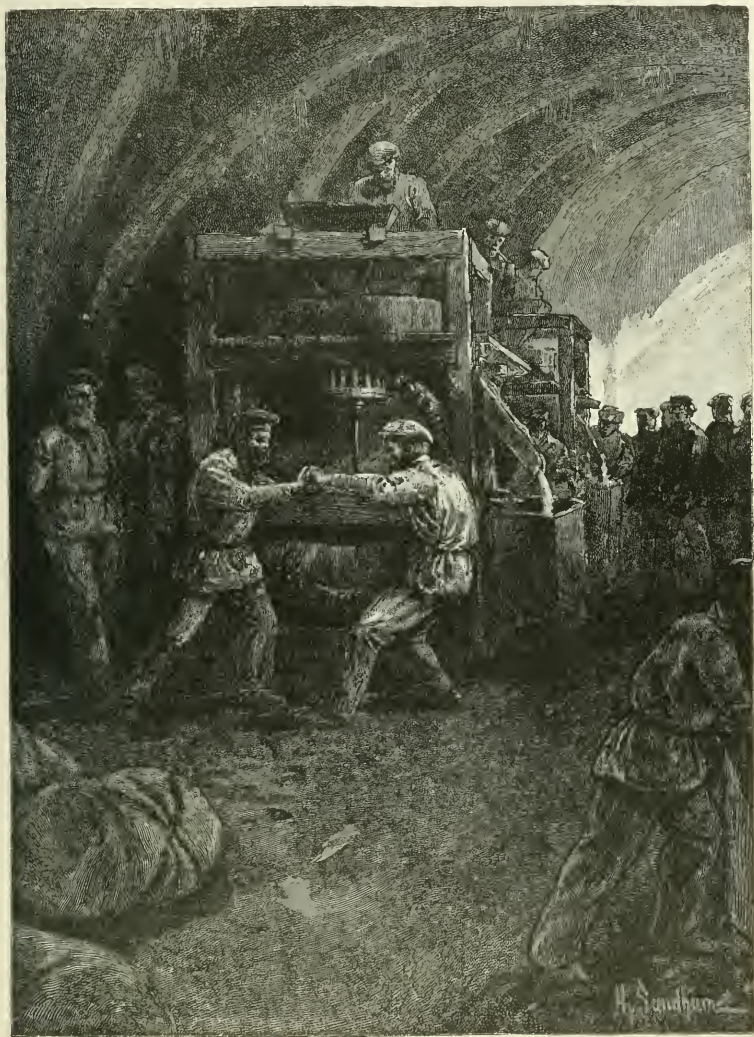
Saturday morning we called upon the prison warden, Mr. Sipiágin, who had already received notice of our coming from the authorities in Irkútsk, and asked permission to go through the institution of which he was in command. Mr. Sipiágin, a pleasant, intelligent, cultivated officer, thirty-five

or forty years of age, received us with the most cordial hospitality, insisted upon our taking a late breakfast with him, and after we had refreshed ourselves with tea, bread and butter, and delicious cutlets served with gravy and delicately browned potatoes, he went with us to the prison.

The Alexandrófski central prison is a large, two-story brick building with a tin roof, standing in a spacious inclosure formed by a high buttressed brick wall. It is somewhat irregular in form, but its greatest length is about 300 feet and its greatest width about 100, with a rather spacious courtyard in the middle. It contains fifty-seven general *kámeras*, in which a number of prisoners are shut up together, ten solitary-confinement cells, and five "secret" cells, intended for the isolation of particularly important or dangerous criminals. It contained at the time of our visit 992 convicts, while about 900 more, who had finished their terms of probation, were living outside the prison walls in the free command. We were taken first to the mills, which were large vaulted apartments in the first story, where 75 or 100 convicts were grinding rye into meal for their own use. The air here was fresh and good; the labor, although hard, was not excessive; and the men who turned the cranks of the clumsy machines were relieved by others as fast as they became tired. This, the warden informed me, was the only hard labor that the inmates of the prison were required to perform, and it occupied only three or four hours a day. From the mills we went to the *kámeras*, which filled the greater part of the large building, and which were occupied by from 15 to 75 men each. They varied greatly in size and form, but all were large enough for the number of convicts that they contained; the ceilings in them were high; the air everywhere was good; the floors and sleeping-benches were scrupulously clean; and nothing seemed to call for unfavorable criticism except perhaps the lack of bedding. In all the cells I noticed ventilators, but some of them had been stopped up with rags or articles of cloth-



ing by the prisoners themselves. The corridors into which the *kámeras* opened were high, spacious, and fairly well



CONVICTS GRINDING RYE IN THE ALEXANDRÓFSKI CENTRAL PRISON.

lighted, and the air in them seemed to be almost as pure as that out-of-doors. From the *kámeras* we went to the

kitchens, where food was prepared every day for more than a thousand men, and where I could discover nothing that was out of harmony with the neatness and good order that prevailed in other parts of the building. I tasted some of the bread and soup furnished to the prisoners and found both palatable and good. The convict ration, Mr. Sipiágin informed me, consisted of three pounds of rye bread, about seven ounces of meat, and three ounces of barley per day, with potatoes or other vegetables occasionally. Tea and sugar were not supplied by the Government, but might be purchased by the prisoners with their own money. When we came out of the kitchens the warden asked us if we would not like to see the school-room. I replied that we certainly should, inasmuch as we had never seen such a thing as a school-room in a Russian prison, and did not suppose that such a thing existed. Mr. Sipiágin laughed, and conducted us to a clean, well-lighted apartment in the second story, which had been fitted up by the convicts themselves with rude desks of domestic manufacture, and had been furnished by the prison authorities with a black-board, a large globe, a wall map of Siberia and another of the Holy Land, and a few cheap lithographs. There were no scholars in the room at the time of our visit to it, but the warden said that the convicts frequently came there to read, sing, or listen to instructive talks from the priest. They were greatly in need of books. They had a few tracts and testaments, left there some years before by the Rev. Mr. Lansdell,<sup>1</sup> but they wanted school-books and a library. From the school-room we went to the shops, where 25 or 30 tailors, shoemakers, and carpenters were hard at work, and where the air was filled with the pleasant odors of fresh pine shavings and Russia leather. The convicts were at liberty, the warden said, to do any work that they were capable of doing, and they received two-thirds of all the

<sup>1</sup> This was the only place in Siberia where I found any trace of the books and tracts that Mr. Lansdell distributed.

money that they earned. One-third was turned over to them, or held by the warden subject to their order, at the



A VISIT TO THE ALEXANDRÓFSKI CENTRAL PRISON AT NIGHT.

time payment was received for the products of their industry; one-third was withheld, to be given to them at the expiration of their terms of probation; and one-third was retained by the Government. After paying a visit to the hospital, which contained only forty-two patients and which



was clean, well ventilated, and in perfect order, we expressed ourselves as satisfied with our inspection of the prison, and returned to Mr. Sipiágin's house. The warden seemed to be very much gratified when I said to him frankly and honestly that I had inspected fifteen prisons in Eastern Siberia, that the one under his command was by far the best of them all, and that I did not see how anything more could be done by local and personal effort to make it better. It was not a "model prison," but at least it would serve as a model for the rest of Siberia.

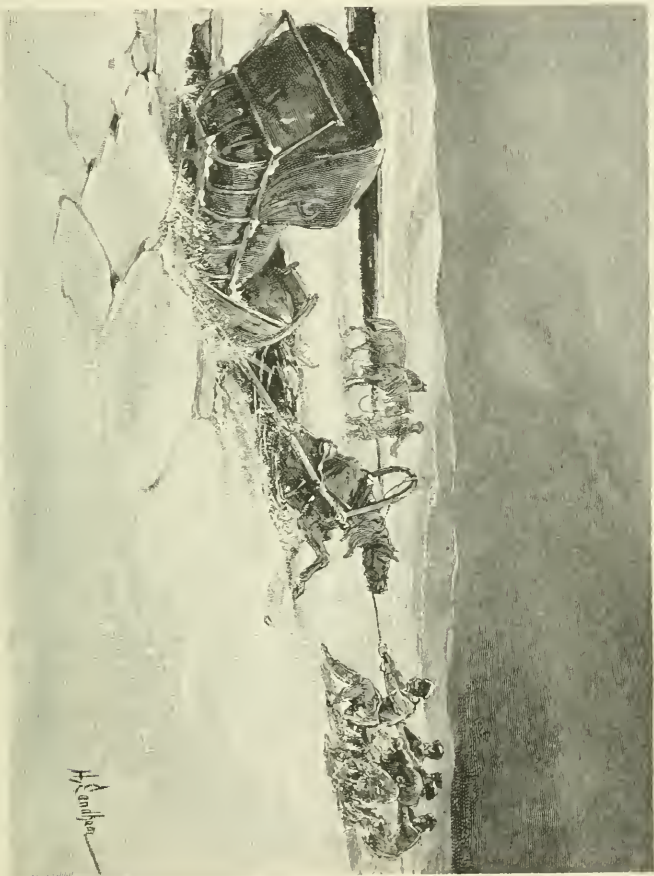
At a late hour Sunday night Mr. Sipiágin, Captain Makófski, the prison surgeon, Mr. Frost, and I went through the prison again to see what was the state of things after the prisoners had retired. The convicts were lying asleep in rows on the plank *návi* without pillows or bed-clothing, and as we entered their dimly lighted cells many of them started up in surprise and alarm, as if afraid that we were about to drag somebody out to execution; but none of them spoke, and we went through six or seven *kámeras* in silence. There were *paráshas*, or excrement-buckets, in all the cells, and the air seemed more contaminated than it had been in the daytime; but even at its worst it was better than in any other prison we had visited. Taken altogether, the Alexandrófski prison seemed to me to be in the highest degree creditable to its warden, Mr. Sipiágin, and not discreditable to the Russian prison administration. It gives me great pleasure to say this, because I did not find much to approve in Siberian prisons generally, and I am glad to have an opportunity to praise where praise is deserved.

Monday morning, after having thanked Mr. Sipiágin and his bright, intelligent wife for their courtesy and hospitality, we bade them good-by and resumed our journey. The road, which lay along the edge of the river, under the high, abrupt hills that bound the Angará on the east, had been overflowed by the backing up of the water due to the formation of the ice gorge, and it was with the greatest diffi-



culty that we could make our way at all over the huge cakes of ice with which it was bestrewn, or along the steep hillside above it. The slope of the bank finally became so steep that our horses could no longer stand upon it, and

THROUGH THE ICE ON THE ANGARA RIVER.



we were forced to drive upon the thin, treacherous ice of the half-frozen river. While we were going at a brisk trot just beyond the village of Olón, the ice suddenly gave way under us, and, with a great crash, horses, sleigh, and all went through into the deep, swift current of the river. Fortunately, the widely extended outriggers of our sleigh pre-

vented it from sinking at once, and by the exercise of agility and good judgment we all succeeded in getting out of it and securing a foothold on the solid ice. We cut our horses free from their harness, dragged them out one by one, hauled out our sledge with fresh horses, and returned to Olón to repair damages. After consultation with the villagers we decided that it would not be prudent to continue our journey down the river in that way. Night was coming on, the river road was impassable, and if we should break through the ice again, in the darkness and away from help, the consequences might be more serious. Late in the evening a good-looking young peasant, tempted by an offer of fifteen *rúbles*, which was about five times the usual rate, agreed to take us to the next village below by a circuitous and difficult route over the mountains. There was no road; but as the snow was not very deep, he thought he could make his way through, and at half-past ten o'clock we started. In all our East-Siberian experience I remember no night more full of hardship, anxiety, and suffering than the one that followed. About midnight a storm came on with high wind, flying snow, and a temperature of fifteen or twenty degrees below zero; we lost our way in the darkness, capsized into ravines, floundered for hours in deep snow-drifts, and lifted and tugged at our heavy, unwieldy sleigh until we were utterly exhausted and half frozen. About four o'clock in the morning I began to feel, at every respiration, a sharp, cutting pain in my right lung, and in less than half an hour I found myself completely disabled. Leaving Mr. Frost and the driver to struggle with the snow-drifts and the exhausted, dispirited horses, I crawled back into the half-capsized sleigh, pulled the sheepskin robe over my shivering body, and gave myself up to gloomy forebodings of pneumonia. What happened between that time and morning I do not remember. Just before daybreak I was aroused by the barking of dogs, and, looking out, was gladdened by



A STORM AT NIGHT IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE ANGARÁ.

the sight of fire-lighted smoke and sparks from the chimneys of three or four log houses. It was the small peasant





CROSSING THE ICE BRIDGE OVER THE ANGARÁ.

village of Páshka. After warming and refreshing ourselves with tea, we pushed on to the settlement of Kámenka, and late in the afternoon crossed the ice bridge over the Angará, and stopped for the night in the comfortable post-station house on the great Siberian road.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE GREAT SIBERIAN ROAD IN WINTER

IT is customary in Siberia, when traveling by post, to ride night and day, without other rest than that which can be obtained in one's sleigh; but when we reached the great Siberian road at the station of Cherómka I was still suffering from the results of the previous night's exposure to storm and cold in the mountains of the Angará, and at every respiration was warned by a sharp, cutting pain in one lung that it would be prudent to seek shelter and keep warm until I should be able to breathe freely. But it was very difficult to keep warm in that post-station. Almost every hour throughout the night travelers stopped there to change horses or to drink tea, and with every opening of the door a cold wind blew across the bare floor where we lay, condensing the moisture of the atmosphere into chilly clouds of vapor, and changing the temperature of the room from twenty to thirty degrees in as many seconds. I had taken the precaution, however, to bring our large sheepskin bag into the house, and by burying myself in the depths of that I not only escaped being chilled, but succeeded, with the aid of medicinal remedies, in getting into a profuse perspiration. This soon relieved the pleuritic pain in my side, and in the morning I felt able to go on. Neither of us had had any sleep, but to the experienced Siberian traveler deprivation of sleep for a night or two is a trifling hardship. I do not think that Mr. Frost had two consecutive hours of sleep in the whole week that we spent on the road between the

Alexandrófski central prison and Krasnoyársk; but when we reached the latter place he went to bed, with his clothes on, and slept sixteen hours without waking.

The route that we intended to follow on our return journey to St. Petersburg differed a little from that which we had pursued in coming into Siberia, and included two important towns that we had not yet visited, namely, Minúinsk and Tobólsk. The former we expected to reach by making a detour of about four hundred miles to the southward from Krasnoyársk, and the latter by taking a more northerly route between Omsk and Tiúmén than the one over which we had passed on our way eastward. Our equipment for the long and difficult journey that lay before us consisted of a strongly built *pavóska*, or seatless traveling-sleigh, with low runners, wide outriggers, and a sort of carriage-top which could be closed with a leather curtain in stormy weather; a very heavy sheepskin bag six feet wide and nine feet long in which we could both lie side by side at full length; eight or ten pillows and cushions of various sizes to fill up chinks in the mass of baggage and to break the force of the jolting on rough roads; three overcoats apiece of soft shaggy sheepskin, so graded in size and weight that we could adapt ourselves to any temperature from the freezing-point to eighty degrees below; very long and heavy felt boots known in Siberia as *válinki*; fur caps, mittens, and a small quantity of provisions consisting chiefly of tea, sugar, bread, condensed milk, boiled ham, frozen soup in cakes, and a couple of roasted grouse. Our heavy baggage had been packed as carefully as possible in the bottom of the *pavóska*, so as to make a comparatively smooth and level foundation; the interstices had been stuffed with pillows and cushions; the somewhat lumpy surface had then been covered to a depth of twelve or fourteen inches with straw; and, finally, over all had been spread our spare overcoats, blankets, and the big sheepskin bag, with a quantity of pillows at the back.

For a day or two after we crossed the Angará we saw nothing of particular interest. In several villages through which we passed between Cherómka and Nízхни Údinsk the *étapes* were evidently occupied by exile parties; but we did not happen to see such a party on the march until Wednesday, and it came upon us then very suddenly and unexpectedly. The day was cold and stormy, with a high wind and flying snow, and we were lying half buried in our sheepskin bag, watching for the next *verst*-post. The atmosphere was so thick with snowflakes that we could not see the road distinctly for a greater distance than seventy-five or one hundred yards, and the party of exiles was fairly upon us before we discovered that it was not—as we at first supposed—a train of *obózes*, or freight-sleighs. I was not absolutely sure of its nature until the head of the column was so near us that I could make out the muskets of the advance-guard of Cossacks and hear the familiar clinking of the prisoners' leg-fetter chains. I then ordered our *yamshchík* to drive out into the deep snow at one side of the road and there stop. The general appearance of the party, as it passed us, was very different from the appearance of the similar party whose departure from Tomsk we had watched in August. Then the convicts were all in their light summer costume of gray, their faces were black with sunburn, and they were enveloped in a cloud of fine yellow dust raised by their shuffling, slipper-clad feet from the powdery road. The exiles before us were all dressed in reddish *pólu-shúbas*, or short overcoats of sheepskin, and *bródnias*, or high-topped leather boots; their faces were pallid from long confinement in the Tomsk forwarding prison, and they were wading slowly and laboriously through fresh-fallen snow. The order of march was the same as in the summer, but on account of the storm and the condition of the road there seemed to be some relaxation of discipline, and a good deal of straggling and disorder. The dress of the marching convicts consisted of the usual gray Tam o' Shanter cap, with a

handkerchief, a ragged tippet, or an old stocking tied over it in such a way as to protect the ears; a *pólu-shúba*, with the reddish tanned side out; long, loose leather boots, which had been stuffed around the feet and ankles with hay to make them warmer; woolen trousers, foot-wrappers, or short woolen stockings, and big leather mittens. The leg-fetters, in most cases, were worn inside the boots, and the chain that united them was looped up in the middle by means of a strap attached to the leather waist-belt. From this point of support it hung down to the ankle on each side between the tucked-in trouser-leg and the boot. With some slight changes—such, for example, as the substitution of a fur hood for the flimsy Tam o' Shanter cap—the dress, it seemed to me, would afford adequate warmth in ordinary winter weather to men whose blood was kept in vigorous circulation by exercise; but it was by no means sufficient for the protection of sick or disabled convicts who were exposed in open vehicles for eight or ten hours at a stretch to all sorts of weather. I noticed a number of such incapables lying in the shallow, uncomfortable one-horse sleighs at the rear of the column, and clinging or crouching together as if to seek warmth in mutual contact. They all seemed to be half frozen to death.

As the straggling column passed us, a convict here and there left the ranks, apparently with the permission of the guard, and, approaching our *pavóska* with bared head and extended cap, begged us, in the peculiar, half-wailing chant of the *milosérdnaya*,<sup>1</sup> to "pity the unfortunate" and to "have mercy on the poor and needy, for Christ's sake." I knew that money given to them would probably be used in gambling or go to the *maidánshchik*<sup>2</sup> in payment for *vódka*; but the poor wretches looked so cold, tired, hungry, and

<sup>1</sup> The exiles' begging song, which I have already described and translated.

<sup>2</sup> The *maidánshchik* occupies something like the same position in a convict party that a sutler occupies in a

regiment of soldiers. Although a prisoner himself, he is allowed, by virtue of long-established custom, to keep a small stock of such luxuries as tea, sugar, and white bread for sale to his

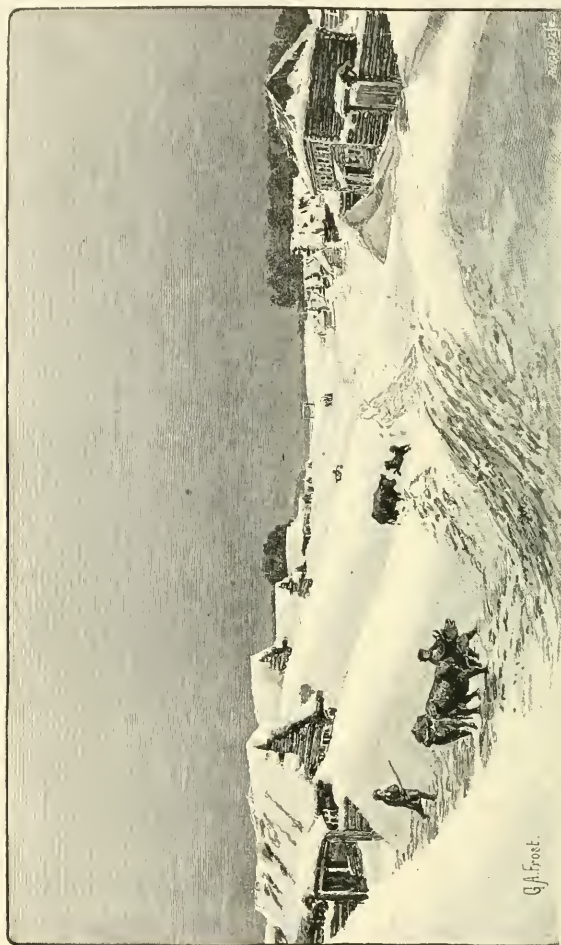


miserable, as they tramped past us through the drifting snow on their way to the distant mines of the Trans-Baikál, that my feelings ran away with my prudential philosophy, and I put a few *kopéks* into every gray cap that was presented to me. The convicts all stared at us with curiosity as they passed; some greeted us pleasantly, a few removed their caps, and in five minutes they were gone, and a long, dark, confused line of moving objects was all that I could see as I looked after them through the white drift of the storm.

After we passed the party of convicts our monotonous life of night-and-day travel was not diversified by a single noteworthy incident. Now and then we met a rich merchant or an army officer posting furiously towards Irkútsk, or passed a long caravan of rude one-horse sledges laden with hide-bound chests of tea for the Nízхни Nóvgorod fair, but we saw no more exiles; the country through which we passed was thinly settled and uninteresting, and the wretched little villages where we stopped to change horses, or to refresh ourselves with tea, were literally buried in drifts of snow. At the post-station of Kamishétskaya, five hundred and thirty *versts* west of Irkútsk, we overtook two political offenders named Shamárin and Peterson who had just finished their terms of administrative exile in Eastern Siberia, and were on their way back to European Russia. We had made their acquaintance some weeks before in Irkútsk, and had agreed to travel with them, if possible, as far as Krasnoyársk; but our route differed somewhat from theirs at the outset, and, owing to our detention at the Alexandrófski central prison, and to our various mishaps on the Angará, we had fallen a little behind them. They greeted us joyously, shared their supper with us, and after an hour or two of animated conversation, in which we re-

fellow-prisoners; and at the same time, he deals surreptitiously in tobacco, with the aid of the soldiers of the con- playing-cards, and *vódka*.  
vow whom it is not difficult to bribe,

lated to one another our several adventures and experiences, we put on our heavy *shúbas*, again climbed into our respective *paróskas*, and with two *tróikas* of horses went on together.



A VILLAGE ON THE GREAT SIBERIAN ROAD

As we approached the town of Kansk, Thursday, January 14th, the sky cleared and the weather suddenly became colder. The thermometer fell that night to thirty degrees below zero, and on the following night to forty degrees below. We continued to travel without stop, but suffered

intensely from cold, particularly during the long hours between midnight and dawn, when it was impossible to get any warm food at the post-stations, and when all our vital powers were at their lowest ebb. More than once, notwithstanding the weight and warmth of our outer clothing, we became so stiff and chilled between stations that we could hardly get out of our *pavóska*. Sleep, of course, was out of the question. Even if the temperature had not made it perilous, the roughness of the road would have rendered it impossible. Under the conjoint action of a dozen howling arctic gales, and four or five thousand pounding freight-sledges, the deep snow that lay on this part of the road had drifted, and had packed into a series of huge transverse waves, known to travelers in Siberia as *ukhábi*. These billows of solidified snow measured four or five feet vertically from trough to summit, and fifteen or twenty feet horizontally from crest to crest, and the jolting and banging of our heavy *pavóska*, as it mounted the slope of one wave and plunged into the hollow of the next, jarred every bone and shocked every nerve-ganglion in one's body. I finally became so much exhausted, as a result of cold, sleeplessness, and jolting, that at every post-station, particularly in the night, I would throw myself on the floor, without blanket or pillow, and catch five or ten minutes' sleep while the horses were being harnessed. At the lonely post-station of Kuskúnskaya, about eleven o'clock one night, I threw myself down in this way on a narrow plank bench in the travelers' room, fell asleep, and dreamed that I had just been invited to make an extempore address to a Sunday-school. The school was in the church of a religious denomination called the "Holy Monopolists." I inquired who the "Holy Monopolists" were, and was informed that they were a new sect consisting of people who believed in only one thing. I wanted very much to ask what that one thing was, but felt ashamed to do so, because it seemed to me that I ought to know without asking. I entered the Sunday-school room,



SNOW-WAVES, OR UKHÁBI, NEAR KRASNOYÁRSK.

which was an amphitheater of seats with a low platform in the middle, and saw, standing on the platform and acting in the capacity of superintendent, a well-known citizen of Norwalk, Ohio, whom I had not seen since boyhood.



All the scholars of the Sunday-school, to my great surprise, were standing in their places with their backs to the platform. As I came in, however, the superintendent said, "You will now please resume your seats," and the boys and girls all turned around and sat down. The superintendent then gave out a hymn, and while it was being sung I made a few notes on the back of an envelope to aid me in the extempore address that I was about to deliver. I decided to give the scholars a talk on the comparative merits of Buddhism and Mohammedanism, and I was just considering the question whether I should not also include fetishism when the hymn came to an end. The superintendent then announced, "We will now proceed to the lessons of the day." "Good!" I said to myself; "that will give me time to think up my speech."

As the recitation began I noticed, to my surprise, that all the scholars held in their hands big, round soda-biscuits, which they looked at now and then as if they were lesson-books. I did not have time, however, to investigate this remarkable phenomenon, because it was urgently necessary that I should get my extempore remarks into some sort of shape before the superintendent should call upon me to speak. I paid no heed, therefore, to the questions that he was propounding to the scholars until he came to one that nobody, apparently, could answer. He repeated it solemnly several times, pausing for a reply, until at last it attracted my attention. It was, "Who was the first progressive-euchre player that after his death was brought back from Alaska amid the mourning of a nation?" As I glanced around at the faces of the scholars I could see that everybody had given up this extraordinary conundrum, and I turned with interest to the superintendent, expecting that he would inform us who this lamented Alaskan euchre-player was. Instead of doing so, however, he bowed towards me and said, "The distinguished friend whom we have with us to-day will please tell us who was the first progressive-euchre

player that after his death was brought back from Alaska amid the mourning of a nation." A cold chill ran down my spine. It suddenly flashed upon me that this must be an elementary fact that even school-children were expected to know—and I was so ignorant that I had never even heard of an Alaskan euchre-player. In order to gain a moment's time in which to collect my faculties I said, "Show me the question." The superintendent handed me a big, hot soda-biscuit, as if it were a book. I examined it carefully on both sides, but could not find on it anything that looked like printing. The superintendent thereupon pulled the two halves apart, and showed me the question stamped in Thibetan characters around the inside of the biscuit about half an inch from the edge. I found in the queer-looking letters no clue to the answer, and in an agony of shame at being forced to confess to a Sunday-school of "Holy Monopolists" that I did not know who was the first progressive-euchre player that died in Alaska and was brought back amid the mourning of a nation I awoke. For a moment I could not recover my mental hold upon life. I was apparently in a place where I had never yet been, and over me were standing two extraordinary figures that I could not remember ever before to have seen. One of them, a tall, powerful man with black, bushy, Circassian-like hair, and blazing blue eyes, was dressed in a long, spotted reindeer-skin *kukhlánka*<sup>1</sup> and high fur boots, while the other, who seemed to be an official of some kind, had on a blue uniform with a double row of brass buttons down the front of his coat, and was holding over my head a kerosene lamp. "What's the matter, Mr. Kennan?" inquired the figure in the reindeer-skin *kukhlánka*. "You have been moaning as if you were in pain."

As memory slowly resumed its throne I recognized in the speaker my exile traveling companion Peterson, and in

- <sup>1</sup> A very heavy fur blouse or over- to the calf of the leg, and confined shirt covering the body from the neck about the waist with a sash.

the official the post-station master. "I have had a bad dream," I replied. "How long have I been asleep?"

"We have been here only ten minutes," replied Peterson, looking at his watch, "and I don't think you have been asleep more than five. The horses are ready."

With stiff and aching limbs I hobbled out to the *pavóska*, crept into the sheepskin bag beside Mr. Frost, and began another long, cold, and dreary night-ride.

Between Kuskúnskaya and Krasnoyársk we experienced the lowest temperature of the winter,—forty-five degrees below zero,—and had an opportunity to observe again the phenomena of extreme cold. Clouds of vapor rose all the time from the bodies of our horses; the freight-wagon caravans were constantly enshrouded in mist, and frequently, after passing one of them, we would find the road foggy with frozen moisture for a distance of a quarter of a mile. When we opened the door of a station-house a great volume of steam seemed to rush into it ahead of us; little jets of vapor played around the holes and crevices of the windows and doors; and in a warm room white frost accumulated to a thickness of nearly half an inch upon the inner ends of iron bolts that went through the window-casings to the outside air. Throughout Friday and Saturday, January 15th and 16th, we stopped to drink tea at almost every post-station we passed, and even then we were constantly cold. This was due partly to the extreme severity of the weather, and partly to the fact that we were compelled, every five or ten miles, to get out of our *pavóska* and help the horses to drag it through the deep soft snow at the side of the road, where we had been forced to go in order to get past a long train of freight-sledges. Sunday, January 17th, nine days after our departure from Irkútsk, we drove into the provincial town of Krasnoyársk, having made, with forty-three relays of post-horses, a journey of about seven hundred miles. Mr. Frost and I took up our quarters in the same hotel at which we had stopped on our

way into Siberia the previous summer, and Messrs. Shamárin and Peterson went to the house of an acquaintance.

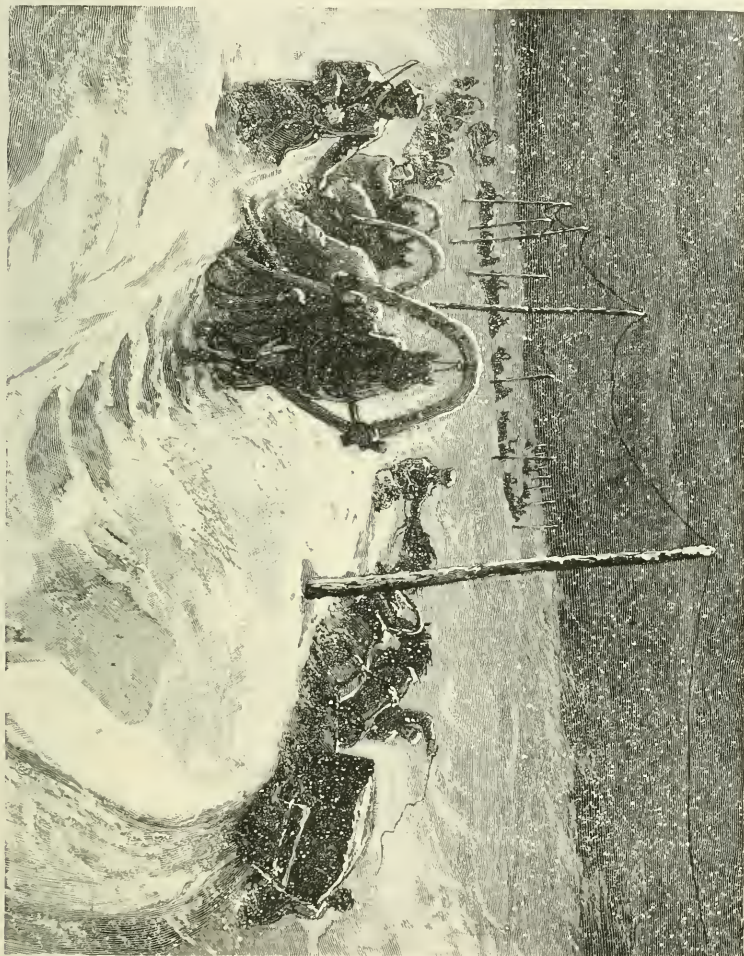
In the course of the three days that we spent in Krasnoyársk we renewed our acquaintance with Mr. Innokénti Kuznetsóf, the wealthy mining proprietor at whose house we had been so hospitably entertained on our way eastward five months before; took breakfast with Mr. Sávenkof, the director of the Krasnoyársk normal school, whose collection of archaeological relics and cliff pictographs greatly interested us; and spent one afternoon with Colonel Zagárin, inspector of exile transportation for Eastern Siberia. With the permission of the latter we also made a careful examination on Wednesday of the Krasnoyársk city prison, the exile forwarding prison, and the prison hospital; and I am glad to be able to say a good word for all of them. The prisons were far from being model institutions of their kind, of course, and at certain seasons of the year I have no doubt that they were more or less dirty and overcrowded; but at the time when we inspected them they were in better condition than any prisons that we had seen in Siberia, except the military prison at Ust Kámenogórsk and the Alexandrófski central prison near Irkútsk. The hospital connected with the Krasnoyársk prisons seemed to me to be worthy of almost unqualified praise. It was scrupulously clean, perfectly ventilated, well supplied, apparently, with bed-linen, medicines, and surgical appliances, and in irreproachable sanitary condition generally. It is possible, of course, that in the late summer and early fall, when the great annual tide of exiles is at its flood, this hospital becomes as much overcrowded and as foul as the hospital of the forwarding prison at Tomsk; but at the time when we saw it I should have been willing, if necessary, to go into it for treatment myself.

The Krasnoyársk city prison was a large two-story building of stuccoed brick resembling in type the forwarding prison at Tiimén. Its *kámeras*, or common cells, were



rather small, but none of them seemed to be crowded, and the inscriptions over their doors, such as "murderers," "passportless," and "politicals," showed that an attempt at least had been made to classify the prisoners and to keep them

PASSING A TRAIN OF FREIGHT-SLEDGES.



properly separated. There were wheel-ventilators in most of the cell-windows and ventilating-pipes in the walls; the stone floors of the corridors were clean; the closet fixtures and plumbing were in fairly good condition; and although

the air in some of the cells was heavy and lifeless, and had the peculiar characteristic prison odor, it could be breathed without much discomfort, and without any of the repulsion and disgust that we had felt in the overcrowded cells of the prisons in Tiimén, Tomsk, Irkútsk, and at the mines. The exile forwarding prison, which stood near the city prison in a stockaded yard, consisted of three large one-story log buildings of the Tomsk type, and presented to the eye nothing that was particularly interesting or new. It did not contain more than half the number of prisoners that, apparently, could be accommodated in it; some of the *kámeras* were entirely empty, and the air everywhere was fresh and good.

By a fortunate chance we reached this prison just in time to see the departure of a marching party of two hundred and seventy male convicts destined for the province of Yakútsk and the mines and prisons of the Trans-Baikál. It was a bitterly cold morning, and two-thirds of the mustered party were walking back and forth in the prison yard, trying, by means of physical exercise, to keep themselves warm while waiting for the medical examination of the other third. After watching them for a moment we entered a large new log building standing a little apart from the prison proper, where we found the prison surgeon, an intelligent, kindly looking man, engaged in making a physical examination of seventy-five or eighty convicts who had declared themselves unable to march. To my inexperienced eye all of them looked thin, pallid, and miserable enough to be excused from a march of twenty miles in such weather and over such a road; but the doctor, after a brief examination by means of scrutiny, touch, and the stethoscope, dismissed as imaginary or frivolous the complaints of nine men out of every ten, and ordered sleighs for the rest. In less than half an hour all was in readiness for a start. The soldiers of the convoy, with shouldered rifles, formed a cordon outside the gate to receive the party; the prison blacksmith made his appearance with hammers, rivets, and





EXAMINATION OF POLITICAL CONVICTS' LEG-FETTERS AT THE PRISON GATE.

spare irons, and carefully examined the leg-fetters of the chained convicts as they came out; the incapables climbed into the one-horse sleighs that were awaiting them; an under-officer counted the prisoners again, to make sure that they were all there; and at the command "March!" the whole party instantly put itself in motion, the soldiers at the head of the column setting so rapid a pace that many of the convicts were forced into a run. In three minutes they were out of sight.

Marching parties of exiles leave Tomsk and Krasnoyársk every week throughout the winter, and go through to their destination without regard to weather, and with no more regard to the condition of the road than is necessary to determine whether it is passable or absolutely impassable. It would be perfectly easy, by making use of horses and vehicles, to transport the whole annual contingent of exiles from Tomsk to Irkútsk during the summer months, and thus relieve them from the suffering that they now endure as the necessary result of exposure to winter cold and winter storms; but for some unknown reason the Government has always persistently refused to take this step in the direction of humane reform. It cannot explain nor defend its refusal by pleading considerations of expense, because the cost of transporting ten thousand exiles from Tomsk to Irkútsk with horses would actually be much less than the cost of sending them on foot. Before me, as I write, lies an official report of Colonel Vinokúrof, inspector of exile transportation for Western Siberia, in which that officer shows that if all the convicts for the whole year were despatched from Moscow in the summer, and were carried from Tomsk to Áchinsk in one-horse wagons instead of being forced to walk, the expense of delivering them in the latter place would be reduced by almost 50,000 *rúbles*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The part of the great Siberian road and for that reason his figures and estimates relate to it alone. In the report to which I refer he makes an itemized statement of the cost of sending 9417 exiles on foot from Tomsk to that lies between Tomsk and Áchinsk, 260 miles in extent, is the only part of the exile marching route over which Colonel Vinokúrof has jurisdiction,



The late Colonel Zagárin, inspector of exile transportation for Eastern Siberia, told me in the course of a long conversation that we had on the subject in Krasnoyársk, that in 1882 or 1883 he made a detailed report to Governor-general Anúchin in which he set forth the evils of the present system of forwarding exiles on foot the year round at the rate of only one party a week, and recommended that the Government restrict the deportation of criminals to the summer months, and then forward them swiftly to their destinations in wagons with relays of horses at the rate of a party every day. He showed conclusively to the governor-general, he said, by means of official statistics and contractors' estimates, that the cost of carrying the annual quota of exiles in wagons from Áchinsk to Irkútsk [780 miles] during the summer months would be fourteen *rúbles* less per capita, and more than 100,000 *rúbles* less per annum, than the cost of sending them over the same distance on foot in the usual way. Besides this lessening of expense, there would be a saving, he said, of at least sixty days in the time occupied by the journey, to say nothing of the economy of human life that would be effected by shortening the period of confinement in the forwarding prisons and *étapes*, and by making the season of exile-travel coincide

Áchinsk in the year 1884, and says: "It thus appears that the expense of forwarding 9417 exiles from Tomsk to Áchinsk—on the basis of a twenty-one days' trip—is not less than 130,342 *rúbles*. This is at the rate of thirteen *rúbles* and seventy-five *kopeks* for every marching prisoner, while the cost of a pair of post-horses from Tomsk to Áchinsk, at the regular established rate, is only eleven *rúbles* and sixty-four *kopeks*." In other words, according to Colonel Vinokúrof's figures, it would be actually cheaper to hire relays of post-horses for every convict and to send him to his destination as if he were a private traveler—or even a Government courier—than

to march him across Siberia "by *étape*" in the usual way. Colonel Vinokúrof then makes an itemized statement of the expense of carrying 9417 exiles from Tomsk to Áchinsk in wagons with relays of horses, and shows that it would not exceed 80,817 *rúbles*. The saving that would be effected, therefore, by the substitution of this method of deportation for the other would be 49,525 *rúbles*, or about \$25,000 per annum, on a distance of only 260 miles. At the same rate the saving for the distance between Tomsk and the mines of Kará would be more than \$175,000 per annum, provided all the prisoners went through.

with the season of good weather and good roads. The overcrowding of the Tomsk forwarding prison, with its attendant suffering and mortality, would at once be relieved by the daily shipment of exiles eastward in wagons; the periodical epidemics of typhus fever, due chiefly to overcrowding, would cease; the corrupting influence of *étape* life upon first offenders and upon the innocent families of banished criminals would be greatly weakened; and, finally, the exiles would reach their destination in a state of comparative health and vigor, instead of being broken down on the road by the hardships and exposures of a thousand-mile winter march.

"Why in the name of all that is reasonable has not this change been made?" I said to Colonel Zagárin when he finished explaining to me the nature of his report. "If it would be cheaper, as well as more humane, to forward the exiles only in summer and in wagons, why does n't the Government do it? Who can have any interest in opposing a reform that is economical as well as philanthropical?"

"You had better inquire when you get to St. Petersburg," replied Colonel Zagárin, shrugging his shoulders. "All that we can do here is to suggest."

The reason why changes that are manifestly desirable, that are in the direction of economy, and that, apparently, would injure no one, are not made in Russia is one of the most puzzling and exasperating things that are forced upon a traveler's attention. In every branch of the administration one is constantly stumbling upon abuses or defects that have long been recognized, that have been commented upon for years, that are apparently prejudicial to the interests of everybody, and that, nevertheless, continue to exist. If you ask an explanation of an official in Siberia, he refers you to St. Petersburg. If you inquire of the chief of the prison department in St. Petersburg, he tells you that he has drawn up a "project" to cope with the evil, but that this "project" has not yet been approved by the Minister of the

Interior. If you go to the Ministry of the Interior, you learn that the "project" requires a preliminary appropriation of money,—even although its ultimate effect may be to save money,—and that it cannot be carried into execution without the assent and coöperation of the Minister of Finance. If you follow the "project" to the Ministry of Finance, you are told that it has been sent back through the Minister of the Interior to the chief of the prison department for "modification." If you still persist in your determination to find out why this thing is not done, you may chase the modified "project" through the prison department, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Finance to the Council of the Empire. There you discover that, inasmuch as certain cross-and-ribbon-decorated senators and generals, who barely know Siberia by name, have expressed a doubt as to the existence of the evil with which the "project" is intended to deal, a special "commission" [with salaries amounting to twenty thousand *rúbles* a year and mileage] has been appointed to investigate the subject and make a report. If you pursue the commission to Siberia and back, and search diligently in the proceedings of the Council of the Empire for its report, you ascertain that the document has been sent to the Ministry of the Interior to serve as a basis for a new "project," and then, as ten or fifteen years have elapsed and all the original projectors are dead, everything begins over again. At no stage of this circumrotatory process can you lay your hand on a particular official and say, "Here! You are responsible for this—what do you mean by it?" At no stage, probably, can you find an official who is opposed to the reform or who has any personal interest in defeating it; and yet the general effect of the circumrotatory process is more certainly fatal to your reformatory project than any amount of intelligent and active opposition. The various bureaus of the provincial governor-general's office, the chief prison department, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance, the

Ministry of Justice, the Council of Ministers, and the Council of the Empire constitute a huge administrative maelstrom of ignorance and indifference, in which a "project" revolves slowly, month after month and year after year, until it is finally sucked down out of sight, or perhaps thrown by a fortuitous eddy of personal or official interest into the great gulf-stream current of real life.<sup>1</sup>

On the occasion of our first visit to Krasnoyársk, in the summer, we had not been able to find there any political exiles, or even to hear of any; but under the guidance of our new traveling companions, Shamárin and Peterson, we discovered three: namely, first, Madam Dubróva, wife of a Siberian missionary whose anthropological researches among the Buriáts have recently attracted to him some attention; secondly, a young medical student named Urúsof, who, by permission of Governor Pedashénko, was serving as an assistant in the city hospital; and, thirdly, a lady who had been taken to that hospital to recover from injuries that she had received in an assault made upon her by a drunken soldier. The only one of these exiles whose personal acquaintance we made was Madam Dubróva, who, in 1880, before her marriage, was exiled to Eastern Si-

<sup>1</sup>This natural history of a Russian "project" is not imaginary nor conjectural. A plan for the transportation of exiles in wagons between Tomsk and Irkútsk has been gyrating in circles in the Sargasso Sea of Russian bureaucracy for almost thirty years. The projected reform of the exile system has been the rounds of the various circumlocution offices at least half a dozen times since 1871, and has four times reached the "commission" stage and been reported to the Council of the Empire. (The commissions were under the presidency respectively of Solohub, Frisch, Zubóf, and Grot. See *Eastern Review*, No. 17, July 22, St. Petersburg, 1882.) Mr. Kokóftsef, assistant chief of the Russian prison department, announced, in a speech that

he made to the International Prison Congress at Stockholm in 1878, that his Government recognized the evils of the exile system and was about to abolish it. (See "Report of the International Prison Congress of Stockholm," by E. C. Wines, United States Commissioner, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1879.) That was thirteen years ago, and my latest Russian newspapers contain the information that the "project" for the reform of the exile system has been found "unsatisfactory" by the Council of the Empire, and has been sent back through the Ministry of the Interior to the chief of the prison department for "modification." In other words, this "project" in the course of thirteen years has progressed four stages backward on the return gyration.



beria for making an attempt, in connection with Madam Róssikova, to rob the Khersón Government Treasury. After the adoption of the so-called "policy of terror" by the extreme section of the Russian revolutionary party in 1878, some of the terrorists advocated and practised a resort to such methods of waging war as the forgery of Imperial manifestos as a means of inciting the peasants to revolt, and the robbery of Government mails and Government treasuries as a means of procuring money to relieve the sufferings and to facilitate the escape of political exiles in Siberia. These measures were disapproved and condemned by all of the Russian liberals and by most of the cool-headed revolutionists; but they were defended by those who resorted to them upon the ground that they [the terrorists] were fighting against tremendous odds, and that the unjust, treacherous, and ferociously cruel treatment of political prisoners by the Government was enough to justify any sort of reprisals. Among the terrorists of this class was Madam Dubróva, or, as she was known before her marriage, Miss Anna Alexéiova. In conjunction with Madam Róssikova, a school-teacher from Elizabethgrad, and aided by an escaped convict from Siberia, Miss Alexéiova made an attempt to rob the Khersón Government Treasury by means of a tunnel driven secretly at night under the stone floor of the vault in which the funds of the institution were kept. Judged from any point of view this was a wild scheme for young and criminally inexperienced gentlewomen to undertake; and that it ever succeeded at all is a striking evidence of the skill, the energy, the patience, and the extraordinary daring that were developed in certain classes of Russian society at that time by the conditions of revolutionary life. Young, refined, and educated women, in all parts of the Empire, entered upon lines of action, and devised and executed plots that, in view of the inevitable consequences, might well have daunted the bravest man. The tunnel under the Khersón Government

Treasury was successfully driven without detection, entrance to the vault was obtained by removing one of the heavy stone slabs in the floor, and the young women carried away and concealed a million and a half of *rúbles* in available cash. Before they could remove the stolen money to a place of perfect safety, however, and make good their own escape, they were arrested, together with their confederate, the runaway convict, and thrown into prison. The confederate turned state's evidence and showed the police where to find the stolen money, and the amateur burglars were sent to Siberia. Madam Róssikova, as the older woman and the originator of the plot, was condemned to penal servitude at the mines, while Miss Alexéiova was sentenced merely to forced colonization with deprivation of certain civil rights. After her marriage in Siberia to the missionary Dubróf, she was permitted to reside, under police supervision, in Krasnoyársk.

I had seen in Siberia, long before my arrival at Krasnoyársk, almost every variety of political offender from the shy and timid school-girl of sixteen to the hardened and embittered terrorist; but I had never before happened to make the acquaintance of a political treasury robber, and when Mr. Shamárin proposed to take me to call upon Madam Dubróva, I looked forward to the experience with a good deal of curiosity. She had been described to me by Colonel Nóvikof, in Chíta, as nothing more than a common burglar who had assumed the mask of a political offender with the hope of getting a lighter sentence; but as Colonel Nóvikof was both ignorant and prejudiced, and as, moreover, pretending to be a political with a view to getting a lighter sentence for burglary would be very much like pleading guilty to murder in the hope of getting a lighter sentence for simple trespass, I did not place much confidence in his statements.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Nóvikof sat as one of the judges in the court-martial that tried Madam Róssikova and Miss Alexéiova, but he was either incapable of understanding the characters of such women or he was trying to deceive me

Shamárin, Peterson, and I went to see Madam Dubróva the night after our arrival in Krasnoyársk, and found her living in one half of a very plainly furnished house in a respectable but not fashionable part of the town, about half a mile from our hotel. She was a lady perhaps thirty years of age, with dark hair, large dark eyes, regular features, clear complexion, and a frank, pleasant manner. Ten years earlier she must have been a very attractive if not a beautiful young girl; but imprisonment, exile, disappointment, and suffering had left unmistakable traces in her face. She greeted us cordially, expressed particular pleasure at meeting a traveler from the United States, regretted that her husband was absent from home, and began at once to question me about the political situation in Russia, and to make inquiries concerning certain of her exiled friends whom I had met in other parts of Eastern Siberia. A general conversation followed, in the course of which I had an opportunity to form a hasty but fairly satisfactory judgment with regard to her character. It was in almost all respects a favorable judgment. No one that was not hopelessly blinded by political hatred and prejudice could fail to see that this was a type of woman as far removed from "common burglars and thieves" as Charlotte Corday was removed from common murderers. You might possibly describe her as misguided, fanatical, lacking in sound judgment, or lawless; but you could class her with common criminals only by ignoring all the characteristics that distinguish a man like John Brown, for example, from a com-

when he described them to me as "nothing but common burglars and thieves." Madam Róssikova was represented to me by all the political exiles who knew her as a woman of high moral standards and self-sacrificing life. She was one of the young women who took part in the quixotic but generous movement known as "going to the people," and lived for seven or eight months like a common peasant

woman in a peasant village merely in order to see how that class of the people could best be reached and helped. As a revolutionary propagandist she was very successful, particularly among the Stúndists or Russian Baptists. She opposed terrorism for a long time, but finally became a terrorist herself under the influence of letters from her exiled friends in Siberia describing their sufferings.

mon brigand. The law may deal primarily with actions, and pay little attention to motives, but in estimating character from the historical point of view motives must be taken fully into account. Madam Dubróva was arrested the first time—before she was eighteen years of age—for going with Madam Róssikova into a peasant village on an errand that was as purely and generously philanthropic as that of the educated young women from New England who went South during the reconstruction era to teach in negro schools. From that time forward she was regarded as a political suspect, and was harried and harassed by the authorities, and exasperated by unjust treatment of herself and her friends until, under the dominating influence of Madam Róssikova—a character of the true John Brown type—she became a terrorist. Like many other young Russians of ardent nature and imperfect acquaintance with the history of man's social and political experiments, she acted sometimes upon erroneous conceptions of duty or mistaken ideas of moral justification; but for this again the Russian Government itself is responsible. Upon the pretense of guarding the moral character of its young people and shielding them from the contagion of "seditious" ideas, it deprives them of the knowledge that is necessary to guide them in dealing with the problems of life, sets them an example of lawlessness by punishing them for social activity that is perfectly innocent and legal, and then, having exasperated them into crime by injustice and cruelty, holds them up to the world as monsters of depravity. I have been accused by Russian officials of idealizing the characters of the political exiles; but when the history of the latter half of the nineteenth century shall have been written, it will be found, I think, that my portraits of the Russian revolutionists, necessarily imperfect and sketchy as they must be, are much more like the originals than are the caricatures of human beings left on record by the prosecuting attorneys of the Crown in their political speeches and indictments.



On the second day after our arrival in Krasnoyársk we narrowly escaped getting into what might have been serious trouble as the result of an unexpected perquisition in the house of the acquaintance with whom Shamárin and Peterson were staying. This acquaintance, it seemed, was under suspicion, and late in the evening, during the absence of the two young men from their quarters, the police suddenly appeared with orders to make a house-search. The search was duly made, but nothing of a suspicious nature was found except the two locked trunks of Shamárin and Peterson. In reply to a question as to what was in them the proprietor of the house said that he did not know, that they were the property of two of his acquaintances who had stopped for a few days with him on their way from Irkútsk to St. Petersburg. Upon being asked where these acquaintances were, he replied that he did not know, that they usually went out after dinner and returned between eleven and twelve o'clock. After a brief consultation the police officers decided that as they had no orders to search the personal baggage of the house-owner's guests they would not force the locks of the trunks, but would merely cord and seal them so that the contents could not be tampered with, and leave them until morning.

When Shamárin and Peterson returned to their quarters about midnight they found their trunks corded and sealed so that they could not be opened. In one of them were many letters from political exiles and convicts in Eastern Siberia to friends and relatives in European Russia—letters describing my investigations and the nature of the material that I was collecting, and asking the friends and relatives in European Russia to coöperate with me—and a photograph of myself that I had given to Shamárin with a dedication or inscription on the back that would reveal to any intelligent police officer the intimate nature of my relations with political convicts. What was to be done? To break a police seal under such circumstances would be a

penal offense and would probably lead to imprisonment and an investigation. To leave the letters and photograph in the trunk would be to insure their discovery and confiscation on the following morning, and that might create a very embarrassing situation for me, as well as for the authors of the letters and their friends. The two young men finally concluded to make an attempt to get the trunk open without removing the cords or breaking the seals, and as the letters and photograph were near the bottom, and as the lid could not be raised even if the trunk were unlocked, they decided to take out a part of the bottom and afterward replace it. By working all the rest of the night they succeeded in getting out one of the bottom boards, obtained the dangerous letters and the photograph, put the board back without disturbing any of the seals, and when the police came in the morning stood by with unruffled serenity and saw the trunk searched. Of course nothing more dangerous than a hair-brush, and nothing more incriminating than a hotel-bill could be found.

There was another little episode at Krasnoyársk which gave us some uneasiness, and that was the offensive behavior of two unknown men towards us one night in a bookstore. The reader will perhaps remember the mysterious pistol-shot that was fired through the partition of our room late one night in Chíta. That incident first suggested to me the possibility of becoming accidentally involved in some sort of affray or mystery that would give the police a plausible excuse for taking us temporarily into custody and making an examination of our baggage. I knew that, on account of the nature of the papers and documents that I had in my possession, such a search would be absolutely fatal, and I resolved to be extremely careful not to fall into any snare of that kind should it be set for me. I even refrained, on one occasion, from going to the aid of a woman who was being cruelly and brutally beaten late at night in the other half of a house where I was call-

ing upon a political convict. I felt sure that her screams would soon bring the police, and I not only did not dare to be found by them in that place, but I did not dare to be connected with an affair that would lead to a police investigation. But it was very hard to hear that woman's screams and not to go to her relief.

The Krasnoyársk incident to which I refer was as follows:

Frost and I early one evening went into the principal bookstore of Krasnoyársk to buy some provincial maps, writing-materials, note-books, and other things of that kind which we happened to need. We were followed into the house by two men in plain citizen's dress whom I had never before seen, and to whom at first I paid little attention. In a few moments, however, I discovered that one of them had attached himself to me and the other to Mr. Frost, and that they were mimicking or caricaturing, in a very offensive way, everything that we did. They were not intoxicated, they did not address any of their remarks to us; in fact they did not make any original remarks at all. They simply mimicked us. If I asked to see a map of the province of Yeniséisk, the man by my side also asked to see a map of the province of Yeniséisk, and did so with an elaborate imitation of my manner. If I went to another part of the store and expressed a desire for writing-paper, he went to the same part of the store and also expressed a desire for writing-paper. The intention to be offensive was so unmistakable, and the manifestation of it so extraordinary and deliberate, that I at once suspected some sort of police trap. No two sane and sober private citizens would follow perfect strangers into a bookstore and behave towards them in this studied and evidently preconcerted manner without some definite object. I could imagine no other object than the provocation of a fight, and as I could not afford just at that time to engage in a fight, there was nothing left for me to do but to transact my business as speedily as possible and to get out of the

store. The men followed us to the sidewalk, but did not speak to us, and we lost sight of them in the darkness. When I asked the proprietor of the store the next day if he



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knew the men he replied that he did not. In view of the mass of documents, letters, and politically incendiary material of all sorts that we had concealed about our persons and in our baggage, and in view of the tremendous interests that we had at stake generally, such episodes as these,